

PURPOSE IN PRAYER

By

E. M. BOUNDS

Author of “Power through Prayer”

Edited by Nathan Zipfel – 2023

New York, Chicago, Toronto

Fleming H. Revell Company

London and Edinburgh

Copyright, 1920, by

FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue

Chicago: 17 North Wabash Ave.

London: 21 Paternoster Square

Edinburgh: 75 Princes Street

This edition has been edited to update archaic words and improve readability without losing the original text's flow.

This "Purpose in Prayer" calls for revival in the Church.

Rev. Nathan Zipfel, MA, MSW

Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
Chapter 1	7
Chapter 2	11
Chapter 3	17
Chapter 4	25
Chapter 5	34
Chapter 6	40
Chapter 7	47
Chapter 8	55
Chapter 9	68
Chapter 10	75
Chapter 11	87
Chapter 12	102
Chapter 13	111

INTRODUCTION

Edward McKendree Bounds was born in Shelby County, Mo., on August 15, 1835, and died on August 24, 1813, in Washington, Ga. He received a common school education at Shelbyville and was admitted to the bar soon after reaching his majority. He practiced law until he was called to preach the Gospel at twenty-four. His first pastorate was Monticello, Mo., Circuit. While serving as pastor of Brunswick, Mo., that war was declared. The young minister was made a prisoner of war because he would not take the oath of allegiance to the Federal Government. He was sent to St. Louis and later transferred to Memphis, Tenn. Finally securing his release, he traveled on foot nearly one hundred miles to join General Pierce's command in Mississippi and was soon after made chaplain of the Fifth Missouri Regiment, a position he held until near the close of the war when he was captured and held as a prisoner at Nashville, Tenn.

After the war, Rev. E. M. Bounds was the pastor of churches in Tennessee and Alabama. In 1875, he was assigned to St. Paul Methodist Church in St. Louis and served there for four years. In 1876, he married Miss Emmie Barnette at Eufaula, Ala., who died ten years later. In 1887, he was married to Miss Hattie Barnette, who, with five children, survived him.

After serving several pastorates, he was sent to the First Methodist Church in St. Louis, Mo., for one year and to St. Paul Methodist Church for three years. At the end of his pastorate, he became the editor of St. Louis "Christian Advocate."

He was a forceful writer and a profound thinker. He spent the last seventeen years of his life with his family in Washington, Ga. Most of the time, he was reading, writing, and praying. He rose at four a. m. each day for many years and was indefatigable in his study of the Bible. His writings were read by thousands of people

and were in demand by the church people of every Protestant denomination.

Bounds embodied humility with a seraphic devotion to Jesus Christ. He reached that high place where the self is forgotten, and the love of God and humanity was the all-absorbing thought and purpose. At seventy-six years of age, he came to me in Brooklyn, N. Y., and so intense was he that he awoke us at 3 a.m., praying and weeping over the loss of earth. During the day, he would go into the church next door and be found on his knees until he called for his meals. This is what he called the "business of praying." Infused with this heavenly ozone, he wrote "Preacher and Prayer," a classic in its line that has now been translated into several foreign languages and is read by men and women worldwide. In 1909, while Rev. A. C. Dixon was preaching in Dr. Broughton's Tabernacle, Atlanta, Ga., I sent him a copy of "Preacher and Prayer" by Bounds. Hear what he says:

"This little book was given to me by a friend. I received another copy at Christmas from another friend. There must be something worthwhile in the little book, or two of my friends would not have selected the same present for me. So, I read the first page until I came to the words, "Man is looking for better methods." God is looking for better men. Man is God's method. That was enough for me, and my appetite demanded more until the book was finished with pleasure."

This present volume is a companion work and reflects the true spirit of a man whose business was to live the Gospel he preached. He was not a luminary but a SUN and took his place with Brainerd and Bramwell as untiring intercessors with God.

H. W. Hodge

My Creed leads me to believe that prayer is efficacious, and indeed, a day spent asking God to overrule all events for good is not lost. Still, there is a great feeling that when a man is praying, he is doing nothing. This feeling makes us give due importance to work, sometimes even to hurrying over or neglecting prayer.

Do we not rest too much on the arm of flesh in our day? Cannot the same wonders be done now as of old? Do not the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those who trust Him? Oh, that God would give me more practical faith in Him! Where is now the Lord God of Elijah? He is waiting for Elijah to call on him.

— James Gilmour of Mongolia.

Chapter 1

The more praying there is in the world, the better the world will be and the mightier the forces against evil everywhere. In one phase of its operation, prayer is disinfectant and preventive. It purifies the air; it destroys the contagion of sin. Prayer is no fitful, short-lived thing. It is no voice crying unheard and unheeded in the silence. It is a voice that goes into God's ear and lives if God's ear is open to holy pleas and if God's heart is open to holy things.

God shapes the world through prayer. Prayers are deathless. The lips that uttered them might be closed in death, and the heart that felt them may have ceased to beat. Still, the prayers live before God, and God's heart is set on them, and prayers outlive the lives of those who uttered them; they outlive a generation; they outlive an age; they outlive a world.

That man is immortal and has done the most and the best praying. They are God's heroes, God's saints, God's servants, and God's vicegerents. A man can pray better because of his past prayers; a man can live holier because of his past prayers. The man of many acceptable prayers has done the most genuine and outstanding service to the incoming generation. The prayers of God's saints strengthen the unborn generation against the desolating waves of sin and evil. Woe to the generation of sons who find their censers empty of the rich incense of prayer, whose fathers have been too busy or too unbelieving to pray, and whose perils inexpressible and consequences untold are their unhappy heritage. Fortunate are they whose fathers and mothers have left them a rich inheritance of prayer.

The prayers of God's saints are the capital stock in heaven by which Christ carries on His great work upon the earth. The great throes and mighty convulsions on earth result from these prayers. Earth is changed and revolutionized, angels move on more

powerful, more rapid wings, and God's policy is shaped as the prayers are more numerous and more efficient.

The mightiest successes that come to God's cause are created and carried on by prayer. God's day of power, the angelic days of activity and power is when God's Church comes into its mightiest inheritance of mightiest faith and prayer. God's conquering days are when the saints have given themselves to the most powerful prayer. When God's house on earth is a house of prayer, God's house in heaven is busy. All potent in its plans and movements, His earthly armies are clothed with the triumphs and spoils of victory and His enemies defeated on every hand.

In prayer, God conditions the very life and prosperity of His cause. The condition was built into the very existence of God's cause in this world. Ask of Me is the one condition God puts in the same advance and triumph of His cause.

Men are to pray—to pray for the advancement of God's cause. Prayer puts God in full force in the world. To a prayerful man, God is present in realized force; to a prayerful church, God is present in glorious power. And the Second Psalm is the Divine description of the establishment of God's cause through Jesus Christ. All inferior dispensations have merged in the enthronement of Jesus Christ. God declares the enthronement of His Son. The nations are incensed with bitter hatred against His cause. God is described as laughing at their enfeebled hatred. The Lord will laugh, and the Lord will have them in derision. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." The decree has passed, immutable and eternal:

I will tell of the decree: The Lord said unto Me, Thou art my Son; This day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, And the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Ask of Me is the condition—a praying people willing and obedient. "And men shall pray for Him continually." Under this universal and straightforward promise, men and women of old laid themselves out for God. They prayed, and God answered their prayers, and the cause of God was kept alive in the world by the flame of their praying.

Prayer became a settled and only condition to move His Son's Kingdom. "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." The strongest one in Christ's kingdom is he, who is the best knocker. The secret to success in Christ's Kingdom is the ability to pray. The one who can wield the power of prayer is the strong one, the holy one in Christ's Kingdom. The most important lesson we can learn is how to pray.

Prayer is the keynote of the most sanctified life and the holiest ministry. He does the most for God, who is most skilled in prayer. Jesus Christ exercised His ministry after this order.

We ought to give ourselves to God concerning things, both temporal and spiritual, and seek our satisfaction only in fulfilling His will, whether He leads us by suffering or consolation, for all would be equal to a soul truly resigned. Prayer is nothing else but a sense of God's presence. — Brother Lawrence

Be sure you look out for your secret duty; keep that up whatever you do. The soul cannot prosper in the neglect of it. Apostasy begins at the closet door. Be very much in secret fellowship with God. It is secret trading that enriches Christians.

Pray alone. Let prayer be the key of the morning and the bolt at night. The best way to fight against sin is to fight it on our knees.
— Philip Henry

The prayer of faith is the only power in the universe to which the Great Jehovah yields. Prayer is the sovereign remedy. — Robert Hall

An hour of solitude passed in sincere and earnest prayer, or the conflict with and conquest over a single passion or subtle bosom sin will teach us more about thought, more effectively awaken the faculty, and better form the habit of reflection than a year's study in the schools without them. — Coleridge.

A man may pray night and day and deceive himself, but no man can be assured of his sincerity who does not pray. Prayer is faith passing into act. A union of the will and intellect is realized in an intellectual act. It is the whole man that prays. Less than this is wishing or lip work, a sham or a mummery.

If God should restore me to health again, I have determined to study nothing but the Bible. Literature is inimical to spirituality if it is not kept under a firm hand. — Richard Cecil

Our sanctification does not depend upon changing our works but on doing that for God's sake, which we commonly do for our own. The time of business does not, with me, differ from the time of prayer. Prayer is nothing else but a sense of God's presence. — Brother Lawrence

Let me burn out for God. After all, whatever God may appoint, prayer is a great thing. Oh, that I may be a man of prayer. — Henry Martyn

Chapter 2

The possibilities and necessity of prayer, its power, and its results manifest in arresting and changing God's purposes and relieving the stroke of His power. Abimelech was smitten by God.

So Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his maidservants; they bore children.

For the Lord had quickly closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

God was angry with Job's miserable, wrong-headed comforters because they had acted so badly in their fight with Job. "My servant Job shall pray for you," God said, "and I will accept him."

"And the Lord turned the captivity of Job around when he prayed for his friends."

Jonah was in dire condition when "the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest." When lots were cast, "the lot fell upon Jonah." He was thrown overboard into the sea, but "the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah... Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly, and the Lord spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

God heard and sent deliverance when the disobedient prophet lifted his voice in prayer.

Pharaoh was a firm believer in the possibilities of prayer and its ability to relieve. When staggering under the woeful curses of God, he pleaded with Moses to intercede for him. "Intreat the Lord for me," he begged the Lord four times while the plagues ravaged Egypt. These urgent appeals were made to Moses four times. Prayer lifted the dread curse from the brutal king and his doomed land.

The blasphemy and idolatry of Israel in making the golden calf and declaring their devotion to it were a fearful crime. The anger of God waxed hot, and He declared that He would destroy the offending people. The Lord was very wroth with Aaron, and to Moses, He said, "Let Me alone that I may destroy them." But Moses prayed and kept on praying; day and night, he prayed for forty days. He keeps a record of his prayer struggles. "I fell down before the Lord during the first forty days and nights; I did not eat bread or drink water because of your sins, which you sinned in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord to provoke Him to anger," he says. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the Lord was angry against you to destroy you. But the Lord listened to me at this time also. And the Lord was very angry with Aaron for having destroyed him, and I prayed for him also at the same time.

"Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." God's purpose was to destroy that great and wicked city. But Nineveh prayed, covered with sackcloth; sitting in ashes, she cried "mightily to God," and "God repented of the evil that He had said He would do unto them, and He did not do it."

The message of God to Hezekiah was: "Set your house in order; for you shall die and not live." Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, prayed to the Lord, and said: "Remember now, Lord, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. "Go, tell Hezekiah, I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your days," God said to Isaiah.

These men knew how to pray and how to prevail in prayer. Their faith in prayer was no passing attitude that changed with the wind or with their own feelings and circumstances; it was a fact that God heard and answered, that His ear was ever open to the cry of His

children, and that the power to do what was asked of Him was commensurate with His willingness. And thus these men, strong in faith and in prayer, "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

Everything then, as now, was possible for the people who knew how to pray. Prayer opened a limitless storehouse, and God's hand withheld nothing. Prayer introduced those who practiced it into a world of privilege and brought the strength and wealth of heaven to the aid of finite man. What a rich and extraordinary power they possessed because they had discovered the secret of a victorious approach to God! With Moses, it saved a nation; with Ezra, it saved a church.

And yet, strange as it seems when we contemplate the wonders of which God's people had been witnesses, there came a slackness in prayer. The mighty hold upon God, which had so often struck awe and terror into the hearts of their enemies, lost its grip. The backslidden and apostate people had stopped praying—if most had ever prayed. The Pharisee's cold and lifeless praying was substituted for any genuine approach to God. The entire worship became a parody of its true purpose due to that formal prayer method. A glorious dispensation was gloriously executed by Moses, Ezra, Daniel, Elijah, Hannah, and Samuel. However, the circle seemed limited and short-lived; the praying ones were scarce. They had no survivors—none to imitate their devotion to God, none to preserve the role of the elect.

In vain had the decree established the Divine order, the Divine call. Ask Me. They turned to paganism after years of earnest and fruitful prayer to God, hoping for answers that would never come. And so, they sank into that godless and pitiful state that has lost its

object in life when the link with the eternal has been broken. Their favored dispensation of prayer was forgotten; they did not know how to pray.

What a contrast to the achievements that brighten up other pages of the Bible! The power working through Elijah and Elisha in answer to prayer reached even to the grave. In each case, a child was raised from the dead, and the powers of famine were broken. "The supplications of a righteous man avail much." Elijah was a man of like passions with us. He prayed fervently that it might not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. Jonah prayed while imprisoned in the great fish, and he came to dry land, saved from storm and sea and monsters of the deep by the powerful energy of his praying.

How wide the gracious provision of the grace of praying as administered in that marvelous dispensation. They prayed wondrously. Why couldn't their prayers save the dispensation from decay and death? Was it not because they lost the fire, without which all praying degenerates into a lifeless form? It takes effort, toil, and care to prepare the incense. Prayer is no laggard's work. When all the rich, spiced graces from the body of prayer have, by labor and beating, been blended, refined, and intermixed, the fire is needed to unloose the incense and make its fragrance rise to the throne of God. The fire that consumes it creates the spirit and life of the incense. Without fire, prayer has no spirit; it is, like dead spices, a breeding ground for corruption and worms.

The casual, intermittent prayer is never bathed in this Divine fire. The man who prays like that is lacking in the earnestness that lays hold of God, determined not to let Him go until the blessing comes. "Pray without ceasing," counseled the great Apostle. That habit drives prayer into the mortar that holds the building stones together. "You can do more than pray after you have prayed," said

the godly Dr. A. J. Gordon, "but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed." The story of every outstanding Christian achievement is the history of answered prayer.

"The greatest and the best talent that God gives to any man or woman in this world is the talent of prayer," writes Principal Alexander Whyte. "And the best usury that any man or woman brings back to God when He comes to reckon with them at the end of this world is a life of prayer." "And those servants best put their Lord's money "to the exchangers" who rise early and sit late, as long as they are in this world, ever finding out and ever following after better and better methods of prayer, and ever forming more secret, more steadfast, and more spiritually fruitful habits of prayer, till they literally "pray without ceasing," and till they continually strike out into new enterprises in prayer, and new achievements, and new enrichments."

When asked about his plans for the following day, Martin Luther answered, "Work, work, from early until late." "In fact, I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." Cromwell, too, believed in being on his knees a lot. Looking on one occasion at the statues of famous men, he turned to a friend and said: "Make mine kneeling, for thus I came to glory."

Only when the whole heart is gripped with the passion of prayer does the life-giving fire descend, for none but the earnest man gets access to the ear of God.

When thou art most disposed to pray, do not yield to it; instead, strive and endeavor to pray even when you think you cannot. — Hilversum.

It was the custom among the Parthians that no one was to give their children any meat in the morning before they saw the sweat on their faces. You will discover that this is God's usual course—

not to give His children a taste of His delights until they begin to sweat in their pursuit of them.— Richard Baxter

Of all the duties enjoined by Christianity, none is more essential and yet more neglected than prayer. Most people consider the exercise a fatiguing ceremony, which they are justified in avoiding as much as possible. Even those whose professions or fears cause them to pray with such languor and wanderings of mind that their prayers, rather than drawing down blessings, only increase their condemnation. — Fenelon

Chapter 3

The secret to success is to pray more and pray better. More time for prayer, more anticipation and preparation for meeting God, and communing with God through Christ—this is the crux of the matter. Our prayer style and content reflect poorly on us. The attitude and relationship of God and the Son are the eternal relationship of Father and Son, of asking and giving—the Son always asking, the Father always giving.

"You will break them with an iron rod; you will smash them like a potter's vessel," says the Lord. "Then I will give you the nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your land."

Jesus must always pray through His followers. "And men shall pray to Him continually." "For My house shall be called a house of prayer for My people." We must prepare to pray; we must be like Christ and pray like Christ.

Man's access to God through prayer opens everything and transforms his poverty into wealth. All things are his through prayer. The wealth and the glory—all things are Christ's. As the light grows brighter and prophets take in the nature of the restoration, the Divine record seems to be enlarged.

"Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and His Maker: inquire of Me concerning the things to come, concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands, and I will command you." "I created the earth and mankind on it; I stretched out My hands and created the heavens, and I commanded all their hosts."

In order to meet the demands of God's earthly kingdom, man is given the authority and power to command God. Heaven, with all it has, is under tribute to carry out the ultimate, final, and glorious purposes of God. So why is it taking so long to carry out these wise benedictions for men? So, why has sin reigned for so long?

Why are the oath-bound covenant promises so slow in coming to their gracious end? Sin reigns, Satan reigns, and sighing marks the lives of many; all tears are fresh and full.

Why is this the case? We have not prayed to bring the evil to an end; we have not prayed as we must pray. We have not met the conditions for prayer.

Inquire of me; ask of God. We have not rested on prayer. We have not made prayer the only condition. There has been a violation of the primary requirement of prayer. We have not prayed correctly. We have not prayed at all. God is willing to give, but we are slow to ask. The Son, through His saints, is ever praying, and God the Father is ever answering.

Inquire of Me. In the invitation is conveyed the assurance of an answer; the shout of victory is there and may be heard by the listening ear. The Father holds the authority and power in His hands. How simple is the condition, and yet how long do we take to fulfill it? Nations are in bondage, and the uttermost parts of the earth are still unpossessed. The earth groans: the world is still in bondage; Satan and evil hold sway.

The Father holds Himself in the "Giver, Ask of Me" attitude, and that petition to God the Father empowers all agencies and inspires all movements. The Gospel is divinely inspired. All its inspirations are based on prayer. All movements are motivated by a request from Me. Standing as the endowment of the enthroned Christ is the oath-bound covenant of the Father: "Ask of Me, and I will give thee the nations for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." "And men shall pray to Him continually."

The prayers of holy men are always as fragrant as the most expensive incense. And God in many ways is speaking to us,

declaring His wealth and our impoverishment. "I am the Creator of everything; wealth and glory are Mine; command me."

We can do all things by God's aid, and we can have all of His aid by asking. The Gospel, in its success and power, depends on our ability to pray. The dispensations of God depend on man's ability to pray. We can have all that God has. Command me, please. This is no figment of the imagination, no idle dream, no vain fancy. The life of the church is the highest life. Its office is to pray. Its prayer life is the highest, the most odorous, and the most conspicuous.

The Book of Revelation says nothing about prayer as a great duty or a holy service. Still, it says a lot about prayer regarding its aggregated force and energies. It is the prayer force ever living and ever praying; it is all the saints' prayers going out as a powerful, living energy while the lips that uttered the words are stilled and sealed in death. In contrast, the living church has the power of faith to inherit the forces of all the past praying and make it deathless.

The statement by the Baptist philosopher, John Foster, contains the purest philosophy and the simple truth of God, for God has no force and demands no conditions but prayer. "More and better praying will bring God's cause the most certain and quick victory; feeble, formal, listless praying will bring decay and death." "The church has its anchor in the closet; its magazine stores are there."

"I am convinced," Foster continues, "that every man who, amidst his serious projects, is aware of his dependence upon God as entirely as that dependence is a fact will be compelled to pray and anxious to induce his serious friends to pray almost every hour. He will not, without it, promise himself any noble success any more than a mariner would expect to reach a distant coast by having his sails spread in stagnant air.

"I have intimated my fear that it is visionary to expect an unusual success in the human administration of religion unless there are

unusual omens." A most emphatic spirit of prayer would be such an omen, and the individual who should decide to try its last efficacy might probably find himself becoming a much more prevailing agent in his little sphere. "And if the whole, or the greater number, of Christian disciples, united with the earnest and unwavering determination of each that heaven should not withhold one single influence which the very utmost effort of conspiring and persevering supplication would obtain, it would be a sign that a world revolution was at hand."

Edward Payson, one of God's own, says of this statement of Foster, "Very few missionaries since the apostles have probably tried the experiment." I believe that whoever conducts the first trial will perform miracles. Nothing I could write or an angel could say could prepare him for this trial.

"One of the principal results of the little experience that I have had as a Christian minister is a conviction that religion consists very much in giving God that place in our views and feelings that He actually fills in the universe." We know that He is everything in the universe. So far as He is constantly all in all to us, so far as we comply with the Psalmist's charge to his soul, "My soul, wait thou only upon God," so far, I apprehend, have we advanced towards perfection. It is relatively easy to wait upon God; but to wait upon Him only—to feel, so far as our strength, happiness, and usefulness are concerned, as if all creatures and second causes were annihilated and we were alone in the universe with God—is, I suspect, a difficult and rare attainment. At least, I am sure it is one that I am very far from having made. We will find everything easier as we achieve this goal because we will be absolutely men of prayer, and we will be able to say of prayer, as Solomon says of money, that it answers all things.

This same John Foster said, when approaching death, "I never prayed more earnestly nor probably with such faithful frequency."

"Pray without ceasing" has been the sentence repeating itself in silent thought, and I am sure it must be my practice till the last conscious hour of life. Oh, why not throughout that long, indolent, inanimate half-century past?

And yet this is how we all act about prayer. Even though we are aware of its importance, even its vital importance, we let the hours pass as a blank and can only lament the irreparable loss in death.

When we calmly reflect upon the fact that the progress of our Lord's Kingdom is dependent upon prayer, it is sad to think that we give so little time to the holy exercise. Everything depends upon prayer, and yet we neglect it, not only to our own spiritual hurt but also to the delay and injury of our Lord's cause on earth. The forces of good and evil are contending for the world. If we would, we could add to the conquering power of the army of righteousness, and yet our lips are sealed, our hands hang listlessly by our sides, and we jeopardize the very cause in which we profess to be deeply interested by holding back from the prayer chamber.

Prayer is the one prime, eternal condition by which the Father is pledged to put the Son in possession of the world. Christ prays through His people. Had there been importunate, universal, and continuous prayer by God's people, long before this, the earth would have been possessed for Christ. The delay is not due to persistent obstacles but rather to a lack of appropriate inquiry. We do a lot of things other than pray. As poor as our giving is, our contributions of money exceed our offerings of prayer. Perhaps in the average congregation, fifty people aid in paying, while one saintly, ardent soul shuts itself up with God and wrestles for the deliverance of the heathen world. Officials praying on set or state occasions count for nothing in this estimate. We emphasize other things more than we do the necessity of prayer.

We are praying in a systematic manner, but we have not yet grasped the world with the grasp of our faith. We are not praying

in such a way that God is moved and all divine influences come to our aid. The world needs more true prayer to save it from the reigning evil of Satan.

We do not pray as Elijah prayed. John Foster brings the whole matter to a practical point. "A revolution will take place when the Church of God is awakened to its obligations and duties and has the right faith to claim what Christ has promised—"all things whatsoever," he says.

But not all praying is prayer. In God's cause, God is the driving force and the conquering force. "Call upon Me, and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knows not" is God's challenge to prayer. Prayer brings God's absolute power into God's work. "Ask of Me concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me," God says. When faith is on its knees, and its outstretched hands take hold of God, it draws to the utmost of God's ability; for only a praying faith can obtain God's "all things whatsoever." The Syrophenician woman, the importunate widow, and the friend at midnight are beautiful examples of what fearless prayer can do in mastering or defying conditions, turning defeat into victory, and triumphing amid despair. Oneness with Christ, the acme of spiritual attainment, is glorious in all things, most glorious in that we can then "ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us." Prayer in Jesus' name puts the crowning crown on God because it glorifies Him through the Son and pledges the Son to give to men "whatever and anything" they shall ask.

In the New Testament, the marvelous prayer of the Old Testament is put forward so that it may provoke and stimulate our praying, and it is preceded by a declaration, the dynamic energy of which we can scarcely translate. "The supplication of a righteous man avails much." "Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it did not rain on the

earth for the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

Our paucity in results, the cause of all leanness, is solved by the Apostle James: "Ye have not, because you ask not." "You ask and do not receive because you ask in vain to spend it on your pleasures."

That is the whole truth in a nutshell.

The potency of prayer has subdued the strength of fire; it has bridled the rage of lions, hushed anarchy to rest, extinguished wars, appeased the elements, expelled demons, burst the chains of death, expanded the gates of heaven, assuaged diseases, repelled frauds, rescued cities from destruction, stayed the sun in its course, and arrested the progress of the thunderbolt. Prayer is an all-efficient panacea, a treasure undiminished, a mine that is never exhausted, a sky unobscured by clouds, a heaven unruffled by the storm. It is the root, the fountain, and the mother of a thousand blessings.

— Chrysostom.

The prayers of holy men appease God's wrath, drive away temptations, resist and overcome the devil, procure the ministry and service of angels, and rescind the decrees of God. Prayer heals sickness and gets forgiveness; it stops the sun's path and stops the wheels of the moon's chariot; it rules over all gods and opens and closes the stores of rain; it opens the cabinet of the womb and puts out the violence of fire; it stops the mouths of lions and makes peace between our suffering and weak faculties and the violence of torment and persecution; it pleases God and gives us everything we need;

More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of. As a result, let your voice rise like a fountain for me at all hours of the

day and night. What makes men superior to sheep or goats is that they nourish a blind life within the brain. If, knowing God, they do not lift their hands in prayer for themselves and those they call friends, as a result, the entire globe is bound in every way by gold chains around God's feet.

— Tennyson.

Perfect prayer is only another name for love. — Fenelon.

Chapter 4

It was said of the late C. H. Spurgeon that he glided from laughter to prayer with the naturalness of one who lived in both elements. With him, the habit of prayer was free and unfettered. His life was not divided into compartments, the one shut off from the other with a rigid exclusivity that barred all intercommunication. He lived in constant fellowship with his Father in Heaven. He was always in touch with God; thus, it was as natural for him to pray as it was for him to breathe.

"What a fine time we have had; let us thank God for it," he said to a friend on one occasion, when, out under the blue sky and wrapped in glorious sunshine, they had enjoyed a holiday with the unfettered enthusiasm of schoolchildren. Prayer came to him as naturally as ordinary speech, and there was never a hint of incongruity in his approach to the Divine Throne straight from any scene in which he might be taking part.

That is the attitude regarding prayer that ought to mark every child of God. There are and there ought to be stated seasons of communion with God when with everything else shut out, we come into His presence to talk to Him and to let Him speak to us, and out of such seasons springs that beautiful habit of prayer that weaves a golden bond between earth and heaven. Without such stated seasons, the practice of prayer can never be formed; without them, there is no nourishment for spiritual life. Utilizing them, the soul is lifted into a new atmosphere — the atmosphere of the heavenly city, in which it is easy to open the heart to God and to speak with Him as a friend speaks with a friend.

Thus, prayer is the most natural outpouring of the soul in every circumstance of life, the unhindered turning to God for communion and direction. Whether in sorrow or in joy, in defeat or in victory, in health or in weakness, in calamity or in success, the heart leaps

to meet with God just as a child runs to his mother's arms, ever sure that with her is the sympathy that meets every need.

Dr. Adam Clarke, in his autobiography, records that when Mr. Wesley was returning to England by ship, the considerable delay was caused by contrary winds. Wesley was reading when he became aware of some confusion on board. After asking what the matter was, he was informed that the wind was contrary. "Then," he replied, "let us go to prayer."

After Dr. Clarke had prayed, Wesley broke out into fervent supplication, which seemed to be more of an offering of faith than a mere desire. "Almighty and everlasting God," he prayed, "Thou hast sway everywhere, and all things serve the purpose of Thy will; thou holds the winds in Thy fists and sittest upon the waters of floods, and reigns a King forever." "Command these winds and these waves to obey Thee, and carry us quickly and safely to the haven where we wish to go."

The power of this petition was felt by all. Wesley rose from his knees, made no remark, but took up his book and continued reading. Dr. Clarke went on deck, and to his surprise, he found the vessel under sail, standing on her right course. Nor did she change till she was safely at anchor. On the sudden and favorable change of wind, Wesley made no remark, so entirely did he expect to be heard that he took it for granted that he was.

That was a prayer with a purpose. Someone who was aware that God could hear him and was ready and able to respond to his request made a clear, direct statement.

Major D. W. Whittle, in an introduction to the wonders of prayer, says of George Muller of Bristol: "I met Mr. Muller in the express the morning of our sailing from Quebec to Liverpool. About half an hour before the tender was to take the passengers to the ship, he asked the agent if a deck chair had arrived for him from New York.

He was answered, "No," and told it could not come in time for the steamer. I had with me a chair I had just bought and told Mr. Muller of the place nearby and suggested, as only a few moments remained, that he had better go buy one at once. His reply was, "No, my brother." Our Heavenly Father will send the chair from New York. It is one used by Mrs. Muller. I wrote ten days ago to a brother, who promised to see it forwarded here last week. He has not been as prompt as I would have desired, but I am sure our Heavenly Father will send the chair. Mrs. Muller is very sick on the ship and wants to have this same chair. Despite not finding it here yesterday, we have prayed that our Heavenly Father would be pleased to provide it for us, and we will trust Him to do so. As this dear man of God went peacefully on board, running the risk of Mrs. Muller making the trip without a chair when, for a couple of dollars, she could have been provided for, I confess I feared Mr. Muller was carrying his faith principles too far and not acting wisely. I was kept at the express office for ten minutes after Mr. Muller left. Just as I started to hurry to the wharf, a team drove up the street, and on top of a load that had just arrived from New York was Mr. Muller's chair. It was sent at once to the tender and placed in my hands to take to Mr. Muller just as the boat was leaving the dock (the Lord having a lesson for me). Mr. Muller took it with the happy, pleased expression of a child who has just received a kindness deeply appreciated. He reverently removed his hat and folded his hands over it. He thanked the Heavenly Father for sending the chair.

One of Melancthon's correspondents writes of Luther's praying: "I cannot enough admire the extraordinary cheerfulness, constancy, faith, and hope of the man in these trying and vexatious times." He constantly feeds these gracious affections through a very diligent study of the Word of God. Then not a day passes in which he does not employ prayer for at least three of his very best hours. Once, I happened to hear him at prayer. Gracious God! What spirit and

what faith are there in his expressions? He petitions God with the same reverence he would have if he were in the divine presence, but with the same firm hope and confidence he would express to a father or a friend. "I know you are our Father and God, and I am confident that you will bring Thy children's persecutors to nothing," he said. Because if you don't, your own cause, which is linked to ours, will be jeopardized. It is entirely your own concern. We, by Thy providence, have been compelled to take part. As a result, you will serve as our defense." "Whilst I was listening to Luther praying in this manner, at a distance, my soul seemed to resonate within me, to hear the man address God so like a friend, yet with so much gravity and reverence; and also to hear him, in the course of his prayer, insisting on the promises contained in the Psalms, as if he were sure his petitions would be granted."

Of William Bramwell, a noted Methodist preacher in England, remarkable for his zeal and prayer, the following is related by a sergeant major: "In July 1811, our regiment was ordered for Spain, then the seat of a protracted and sanguinary war." My mind was painfully exercised with the thoughts of leaving my dear wife and four helpless children in a strange country, unprotected and unprovided for. Mr. Bramwell felt a lively interest in our situation, and his sympathetic spirit seemed to drink in all the agonized feelings of my tender wife. He supplicated the throne of grace day and night on our behalf. My wife and I spent the evening before our march at a friend's house in company with Mr. Bramwell, who sat in a very reflective mood and appeared to be in a spiritual struggle all the time. After supper, he suddenly pulled his hand out of his bosom, laid it on my knee, and said, "Brother Riley, mark what I am about to say!" You are not permitted to travel to Spain. Remember, I told you, you are not; for I have been wrestling with God on your behalf, and when my Heavenly Father condescends in mercy to bless me with power to lay hold on Himself, I do not easily let Him go; no, not until I am favored with an answer.

Therefore, you may depend on it that the next time I hear from you, you will be settled in quarters. This came to pass exactly as he said. The following day, the order to travel to Spain was revoked.

These men prayed with a purpose. To them, God was not far away, in some inaccessible region, but near at hand, ever ready to hear the call of His children. There was no barrier between them. They were in perfect intimacy, if one may use such a phrase concerning man and his Maker. No cloud obscured the face of the Father from His trusting child, who could look up into the Divine countenance and pour out the longings of his heart. And that is the type of prayer that God never fails to hear. He knows that it comes from a heart at one with His own, from one who has entirely yielded to the heavenly plan. So He bends His ear and gives the pleading child the assurance that his petition has been heard and answered.

Have we not all had some such experience when, with set and undeviating purpose, we have approached the face of our Father? In an agony of the soul, we have sought refuge from the oppression of the world in the anteroom of heaven; the waves of despair seemed to threaten destruction, and as no way of escape was visible anywhere, we fell back, like the disciples of old, upon the power of our Lord, crying to Him to save us lest we perish. And then, in the twinkling of an eye, the thing was done. The billows sank into a calm; the howling wind died down at the Divine command; the agony of the soul passed into a restful peace as over the whole being there crept the consciousness of the Divine presence, bringing with it the assurance of answered prayer and sweet deliverance.

"I tell the Lord my troubles and difficulties and wait for Him to answer them," says one man of God. "And it is wonderful how a matter that looked very dark will, in prayer, become clear as crystal with the help of God's Spirit." I think Christians fail so often to get answers to their prayers because they do not wait long

enough on God. They drop down and say a few words, jump up, forget it, and expect God to answer them. Such praying always reminds me of the small boy ringing his neighbor's doorbell and then running away as fast as he can.

When we acquire the habit of prayer, we enter into a new atmosphere. "Do you expect to go to heaven?" asked a devout Scotsman. "Why, man, I live there," was the quaint and unexpected reply. It was a pithy statement of a great truth, for all the way to heaven is heaven begun for the Christian who walks near enough to God to hear the secrets He has to impart.

This attitude is beautifully illustrated in the story of Horace Bushnell, told by Dr. Parkes Cadman. Bushnell was found to be suffering from an incurable disease. One evening the Rev. Joseph Twitchell visited him, and, as they sat together under the starry sky, Bushnell said, "One of us ought to pray." Twitchell asked Bushnell to do so, and Bushnell began his prayer, burying his face in the earth and pouring out his heart until, said Twitchell, in recalling the incident, "I was afraid to stretch out my hand in the darkness lest I should touch God."

To have God thus near is to enter the holy of holies—to breathe the fragrance of the heavenly air, to walk in Eden's delightful gardens. Nothing but prayer can bring God and man into this happy communion. That was the experience of Samuel Rutherford, just as it is the experience of everyone who passes through the same gateway. When this saint of God was confined in jail at one time for conscience's sake, he enjoyed in a rare degree the Divine companionship, recording in his diary that Jesus entered his cell and that at His coming "every stone flashed like a ruby."

Many others have borne witness to the same sweet fellowship when prayer had become the one habit of life that meant more than anything else to them. David Livingstone lived in the realm of prayer and knew its gracious influence. Every birthday, he wrote a

prayer, and on the next-to-last birthday of all, he wrote: "O Divine One, I have not loved Thee earnestly, deeply, and sincerely enough." Grant, I beseech Thee that I may complete my task before the end of the school year. Only on the eve of the following year, as his faithful men looked into Ilala's but while the rain dripped from the eaves, did they see their master on his knees beside his bed in a prayerful posture. He had died on his knees in prayer.

Stonewall Jackson was a man of prayer. Said he: "I have so fixed the habit in my mind that I never raise a glass of water to my lips without asking God's blessing, never seal a letter without putting a word of prayer under the seal, never take a letter from the post without a brief sending of my thoughts heavenward, and never change my classes in the lecture room without a minute's petition for the cadets who go out and for those who come in."

James Gilmour, the pioneer missionary to Mongolia, was a man of prayer. He had a habit in his writing of never using a blotter. He made it a rule that when he got to the bottom of any page, he would wait until the ink dried and spend the time in prayer.

In this way, their whole being was saturated with the Divine. They became reflectors of its heavenly fragrance and glory. Walking with God down the avenues of prayer, we acquire something of His likeness, and unconsciously we become witnesses to others of His beauty and grace. In his famous work, "Varieties of Religious Experience," Professor James tells of a man of forty-nine who said: "God is more real to me than any thought, thing, or person." I feel His presence positively and more as I live in closer harmony with His laws as they are written in my body and mind. I feel Him whether it's sunny or raining, and this, along with a sweet sense of restfulness, is the best way to describe how I feel. I talk to Him as a companion in prayer and praise, and our communion is delightful. He answers me repeatedly, often in words so clearly

spoken that it seems my outer ear must have carried the tone, but generally in strong mental impressions. Usually, a text of Scripture unfolds some new view of Him and His love for me and care for my safety—that He is mine and I am his—never leaves me; it is an abiding joy. "Without it, life would be a blank, a desert, a shoreless, trackless waste."

Equally amazing is the testimony of Sir Thomas Browne. This beloved physician lived in Norwich in 1605 and was the author of a very remarkable book of wide circulation, "Religion Medici." Even though England was passing through a period of national convulsion and political excitement, he found comfort and strength in prayer. "I have resolved," he wrote in a journal found among his private papers after his death, "to pray more and always pray, to pray in all places where quietness reigns, in the house, on the highway, and on the street, and to know no street or passage in this city that may not witness that I have not forgotten God." "I intend to take the occasion of praying upon the sight of any church which I may pass, that God may be worshipped there in spirit, and that souls may be saved there; to pray daily for my sick patients and for the patients of other physicians; to say, "May the peace of God abide here" at my entrance into any home; after hearing a sermon, to pray for a blessing on God's truth and upon the messenger; upon the sight of a beautiful person to bless God for His creation."

What an illustration of the praying spirit! Such an attitude represents prayer without ceasing and reveals the habit of prayer in its unceasing supplication, its uninterrupted communion, and its constant intercession. What an illustration, too, of purpose in prayer! Of how many of us can it be said that as we pass people in the street, we pray for them, or that as we enter a home or a church, we remember the inmates or the congregation in prayer to God?

The explanation for our thoughtlessness or forgetfulness lies in the fact that prayer for so many of us is a form of selfishness; it means asking for something for ourselves and nothing more.

And with such an attitude, we need to pray to be delivered.

The prayer of faith is the only power in the universe to which the great Jehovah yields. Prayer is the sovereign remedy. — Robert Hall

The Church, intent on the acquisition of temporal power, had abandoned its spiritual duties, and its empire, which rested on spiritual foundations, was crumbling with their decay and threatened to pass away like an unsubstantial vision. — Lea's Inquisition.

Chapter 5

Are we praying as Christ did? Do we abide in Him? Are our pleas and spirit the overflow of His spirit and pleas? Does perfect love rule the spirit?

These questions must be considered proper and pertinent at a time like the present. We are concerned that we are doing things other than praying. This is not a praying age; it is an age of great activity and great movements, but one in which the tendency is powerful to stress the seen and the material and to neglect and discount the unseen and the spiritual. Prayer is the most powerful force because it honors God and calls Him to action.

There can be no substitute, no rival, for prayer; it stands alone as the great spiritual force, and this force must be imminent and acting. It cannot be dispensed with during one generation or held in abeyance for the advance of any significant movement—it must be continuous and, always, everywhere and in everything. We cannot run our spiritual operations on the prayers of the past generation. Many people believe in the power of prayer, but few practice it. Prayer is the easiest and hardest of all things, the simplest and the sublimest, the weakest and the most powerful; its results lie outside the range of human possibilities—they are limited only by the omnipotence of God.

Few Christians have anything but a vague idea of the power of prayer; even fewer have any experience with that power. The Church seems wholly unaware of the power God puts into her hands; this spiritual *carte blanche* on the infinite resources of God's wisdom and power is rarely, if ever, used—never used to the full measure of honoring God. It is astounding how poor the use, how little the benefits. Prayer is our most formidable weapon, but it is also the one in which we are the least skilled and the most averse to its use. We do everything else for the heathen except the thing

God wants us to do; the only thing that does any good makes all else we do efficient.

To graduate from the school of prayer is to master the whole course of religious life. The first and last stages of holy living are crowned with prayer. It is a life trade. Obstacles to prayer are obstacles to living a holy life. The conditions of praying are the conditions of righteousness, holiness, and salvation. A cobbler in the trade of praying is a bungler in the work of salvation.

Prayer is a trade to be learned. We must be apprentices and serve our time in this capacity. Painstaking care, much thought, practice, and labor are required to be a skilled tradesman in praying.

Practice in this, as well as in all other trades, makes perfect. Working hands and hearts produce experts in this heavenly trade.

In spite of the benefits and blessings that flow from communion with God, the sad confession must be made that we are not praying much. At the meetings, a very small number of people lead in prayer. Fewer still pray in their families. Fewer still are in the habit of praying regularly in their closets. Meetings specifically for prayer are as rare as frost in June. In many churches, there is neither the name nor the semblance of a prayer meeting. In town and city churches, the prayer meeting in name is not a prayer meeting in fact. A sermon or a lecture is the main feature. Prayer is the nominal attachment.

Our people are not a praying people. That is clear from their lives.

Prayer and the holy life are one. They mutually act and react. Neither can survive alone. The absence of one is the absence of the other. The monk corrupted prayer, substituting superstition for prayer, and mummies and routine for a holy life. We are in danger of substituting churchly work and a ceaseless round of showy activities for prayer and holy living. A holy life does not live in the closet, but it cannot exist without the closet. If, by any chance, a

prayer chamber was to be established without a holy life, it would be a chamber without the presence of God in it.

Put the saints everywhere to work praying; that is the burden of the apostolic effort and the key to apostolic success. Jesus Christ had striven to do this in the days of His personal ministry. He was moved by infinite compassion at the ripened fields of earth perishing for lack of laborers, and pausing in His own praying, He tried to awaken the sleeping sensibilities of His disciples to the duty of prayer as He charged them: "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." And He spoke a parable to them to this end, saying that men ought always to pray.

Before Pentecost, the apostles could only catch glimpses of the importance of prayer. But the Spirit's coming and filling on Pentecost elevated prayer to its vital and all-commanding position in the Gospel of Christ. The call now to prayer for every saint is the Spirit's loudest and most exigent call. Sainthood's piety is made, refined, and perfected by prayer. When the saints are not at their prayers early, late, and long, the Gospel moves at a slow and timid pace.

Where are the Christlike leaders who can teach the modern saints how to pray and then put them to it? Do our leaders know we are raising up a prayerless set of saints? Where are the apostolic leaders who can get God's people praying? Let them come to the front and do the work, and it will be the most incredible work that can be done.

An increase in educational facilities and a significant increase in financial resources will be the direst curse to religion if they are not sanctified by more and better praying than we are doing.

More praying will not come as a matter of course. If we are not careful, the campaign for the twentieth or twenty-first centuries

will not help but hinder our prayer. Nothing but a specific effort from a praying leadership will avail. Only praying leaders can have praying followers. Praying apostles will beget praying saints. A praying pulpit will beget praying pews. We do need somebody who can set the saints to this business of praying. We are a generation of non-praying saints. Non-praying saints are a beggarly gang of saints who have neither the ardor, beauty, nor power of saints. Who will restore this branch? The most significant will be reformers and apostles who can inspire the church to pray.

Through prayer, holy men have changed the entire force of affairs and revolutionized character and country in the past. And such achievements are still possible for us. The power only wants to be used. Faith is expressed through prayer.

Prayer has done so many great things that it would take too long to list them all. The holy people have "subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, put out the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, become strong when they were weak, become brave in battle, sent the armies of the aliens running, and women have seen their dead come back to life."

Prayer honors God, but it dishonors oneself. It is man's cry of helplessness, ignorance, and want. A plea that heaven cannot disregard. God delights in having us pray.

Prayer is not the enemy of work; it does not paralyze activity. It works mightily; prayer itself is the greatest work. It promotes activity and increases desire and effort. Prayer is not an opiate but a tonic; it does not put you to sleep but instead awakens you to action. The lazy man does not, will not, or cannot pray, for prayer demands energy. Paul describes it as a struggle, an agony. With Jacob, it was a wrestling match; with the Syrophenician woman, it was a struggle that called into play all the higher qualities of the soul and demanded great force to meet.

The closet is not an asylum for indolent and worthless Christians. It is not a nursery where only babies belong. It is the church's battlefield, citadel, and scene of heroic and unearthly conflicts. The closet serves as a supply depot for Christians and the Church. Cut off from it. There is nothing left but retreat and disaster. Prayer greatly accelerates the energy for work, mastery over oneself, deliverance from fear, and all spiritual results and graces. The difference between Christians' strength, experience, and holiness is found in contrast in their praying.

Few, short, feeble prayers always betray a low spiritual condition. Men should pray a lot and put in much effort and perseverance. Eminent Christians have been prominent in prayer. The deep things of God are learned nowhere else. Great prayers accomplish remarkable things for God. He who prays much, studies much, loves much, works much, and does much for God and humanity. The execution of the Gospel, the vigor of faith, and the maturity and excellence of spiritual graces wait on prayer.

"Nothing is impossible for industry," said one of the seven sages of Greece. Let us change the word industry to persevering prayer, and the motto will be more Christian and more worthy of universal adoption. I am persuaded that we are all more deficient in a spirit of prayer than in any other grace. God loves importunate prayer so much that He will not give us much blessing without it. And the reason that He loves such prayer is that He loves us and knows that it is a necessary preparation for our receiving the richest blessings that He is waiting and longing to bestow.

I never prayed sincerely and earnestly for anything. Still, it came at some point—no matter how distant a day, somehow, in some shape, the last I would have devised, it came. Adeniran Judson

It is good, I find, to persevere in attempts to pray. If I cannot pray with perseverance or continue long in my addresses to the Divine Being, I have discovered that the more I do in secret prayer, the

more I delight to do so and have enjoyed more of the spirit of prayer; and frequently I have discovered the contrary when I have been deprived of retirement by journeying or otherwise. — David Brainerd

Chapter 6

Christ cites persistence as a distinguishing characteristic of true prayer. We must not only pray but also with great urgency, intentness, and repetition. We must not only pray, but we must pray repeatedly. We must not get tired of praying. We must be profoundly earnest and concerned about the things we ask for, for Jesus Christ made it clear that the secret of prayer and its success lies in its urgency. We must be persistent in our prayers to God.

In a story that was both moving and simple, Our Lord taught men not only that they should pray but also that they should pray with all their hearts and fight for what they believe in.

"And He told them a parable so they might always pray and not faint." There was in a city a judge who feared not God and regarded no man. A widow in that city often came to him, saying, "Avenge me of my adversary." And he would not for a while, but afterward, he said within himself, "Though I fear neither God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest she wears me out by her continual coming." And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says." Will God not avenge His elect, who call out to Him at all hours of the day and night, and He is patient with them? I assure you that He will swiftly avenge them. "However, will the Son of Man find faith on earth when He comes?"

This poor woman's case was a very hopeless one, but persistence brings hope from the realms of despair and creates success where neither success nor its conditions existed. There could be no stronger case to show how unwearied and dauntless persistence gains its ends where everything else fails. The preface to this parable says: "He spoke a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint." He knew that men would soon get

fainthearted in praying, so to hearten us, he gives this picture of the marvelous power of perseverance.

The widow, weak and helpless, personifies helplessness; devoid of every hope and influence that could persuade an unjust judge, she wins her case solely through her tireless and offensive persistence. Could the necessity of perseverance, its power, and its tremendous importance in prayer be pictured in a deeper or more impressive color? It surmounts or removes all obstacles, overcomes every resisting force, and gains its ends in the face of invincible hindrances. We can do nothing without prayer. All things can be done through persistent prayer.

That is the teaching of Jesus Christ. Another parable spoken by Jesus reinforces the same great truth. A man at midnight goes to his friend for a loan of bread. His pleas are strong, based on friendship and the embarrassing and exacting demands of necessity, but these all fail. He gets no bread, but he stays, presses, waits, and gains. Sheer persistence succeeds where all other pleas and influences have failed.

The case of the Syrophenician woman is a parable in action. The knowledge that he will not see anyone stops her from approaching Christ. She is denied His presence, then treated with apparent apathy, silence, and unconcern: she presses and approaches, but both are repulsed by the firm and crushing declaration that He is not sent to her kind, that she is barred from His mission and power. She is humiliated by being called a dog. Despite this, she accepts everything, overcomes everything, and wins everything through her humble, fearless, and invincible persistence. The Son of God, pleased, surprised, and overpowered by her unconquerable perseverance, says to her: "O, woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Jesus Christ surrenders Himself to the persistence of great faith. "And shall not God avenge His own

elect, which cries day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them?"

One of the elements of prayer and one of the main conditions of prayer, according to Jesus Christ, is the ability to be persistent. The prayer of the Syrophenician woman shows the unbeatable power of sticking with something, of a battle that was more real and involved more vital energy, endurance, and all the higher things than the battles of Isthmia or Olympia.

The first lessons of persistence are taught in the Sermon on the Mount: "Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." These are steps in advance: "For every one that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds; and to him, that knocks, it shall be opened."

Without continuation, the prayer may go unanswered. Persistence is the ability to hold on, press on, and wait with an unrelaxed and unrelaxable grasp, restless desire, and restful patience. Persistent prayer is not an incident but the main thing, not a performance but a passion, not a need but a necessity.

The highest and most beautiful form of prayer is like wrestling with God. The contest, trial, and victory of faith—a victory not secured from an enemy but from Him who tries our faith that He may enlarge it—tests our strength to make us stronger. Few things give the soul such quickened and permanent vigor as a long, exhaustive season of persistent prayer. It creates an experience, an epoch, a new spiritual calendar, a new religious life, and soldierly training. The Bible never tires of emphasizing and illustrating that the highest spiritual good is secured due to the highest form of spiritual effort. There is neither encouragement nor room in Bible religion for feeble desires, listless actions, or lazy attitudes; all must be strenuous, urgent, and ardent. Inflamed passions and impassioned, unwearied insistence delight heaven. God would have His children be incorrigibly earnest and persistently bold in

their efforts. Heaven is too busy to hear half-hearted prayers or respond to pop calls.

Our whole being must be in our praying; like John Knox, we must say and feel, "Give me Scotland, or I die." Our experience and revelations of God are products of our costly sacrifices, conflicts, and praying. Jacob's wrestling and all-night praying brought God to the rescue, changed Esau's attitude and behavior, changed Jacob's character, saved and changed his life, and became a nation's way of life.

When we go through hard times and pray for help, those times leave marks on us that will never go away. They are the salient periods of our lives! The memorial stones that endure and to which we turn.

Persistence, it may be repeated, is a condition of prayer. We are to press the matter, not with vain repetitions but with urgent repetitions. We repeat not to count the number of times but to obtain the prayer. We cannot quit praying because our hearts and souls are in it. We pray "with all perseverance." We cling to our prayers because they keep us alive. We press our pleas because we must have them or die. Christ gives us two of his most expressive parables to emphasize the necessity of impetus in praying. Perhaps Abraham lost Sodom by failing to press his privilege of praying to the utmost. Joash, as we know, lost because he kept smiting.

Perseverance is essential to both God and man. If Elijah had ceased at his first petition, the heavens would have scarcely yielded their rain to his feeble praying. Jacob would barely have survived the next day's meeting with Esau if he had quit praying at a decent bedtime. If the Syrophenician woman had allowed her faith to faint through silence, humiliation, repulse, or stopping mid-struggle, her grief-stricken home would never have been brightened by her daughter's healing.

Pray and never faint is the motto Christ gives us for praying. It is the test of our faith, and the more severe the trial and the longer the wait, the more glorious the results.

The benefits and necessity of persistence are taught by the Old Testament saints. Praying men must be strong in hope, faith, and prayer. They must understand how to wait and press, rely on God, and be sincere in their approaches to Him.

Abraham has left us an example of persistent intercession in his passionate pleading with God on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah. If, as already indicated, he had not ceased asking, perhaps God would not have stopped in His giving. Abraham left off asking before God left off granting. Moses taught the power of persistence when he interceded for Israel for forty days and forty nights through fasting and prayer. And he was successful in his endeavor.

Jesus, in His teaching and example, illustrated and perfected this principle of Old Testament pleading and waiting. How strange that the only Son of God, who came on a direct mission from His Father, whose only heaven was on earth, and whose only life and law were to do His Father's will in that mission, should be subject to the law of prayer, that the blessings that came to Him were impregnated and purchased by prayer, and even stranger, that the process by which He obtained His richest supplies from God was persistence in prayer. No transfiguration would have occurred if He had not prayed urgently; no mighty works would have made His career divine. His all-night prayer was what filled his all-day work with compassion and power. The triumph of His death was crowned by His life's passionate praying. Before illustrating that submission so sublimely on the cross, Jesus learned the high lesson of submission to God's will in the struggles of imploring prayer.

"Whether we like it or not," Mr. Spurgeon declared, "asking is the kingdom's rule; ask, and ye shall receive." It is a rule that will never be changed in any circumstance. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the

elder brother of the family, but God has not relaxed the rule for Him. Remember this text: "Ask of Me, and I will give the heathen for Thy inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Thy possession," Jehovah says to His own Son. If the Royal and Divine Son of God cannot be exempted from the rule of asking that He may have, you and I cannot expect the rule to be relaxed in our favor. Why should it be? What reason can be pleaded for why we should be exempted from prayer? What argument can there be why we should be deprived of the privilege and delivered from the necessity of supplication? I can see none. Can you? God will bless Elijah and send rain on Israel, but Elijah must pray for it. If the chosen nation is to prosper, Samuel must plead for it. If the Jews are to be delivered, Daniel must intercede. God will bless Paul, and the nations shall be converted through him, but Paul must pray. Pray, he did without ceasing; his epistles show that he expected nothing except by asking for it. "If you may have everything by asking and nothing without asking, I beg you to see how absolutely vital prayer is, and I beseech you to abound in it."

Doubtless, much of our praying fails for a lack of persistence. It is lacking in zeal and strength of perseverance. Persistence is the essence of true prayer. It may not always be called into exercise, but it must be there as the reserve force. Jesus taught that perseverance is the essential element of prayer. Men must be in earnest when they kneel at God's footstool.

Too often, we get faint-hearted and quit praying at the point where we ought to begin. We let go precisely where we should have gripped the most tightly. Our prayers are weak because they are not impassioned by an unflinching and resistless will.

God loves the persistent pleader and sends him answers that would never have been granted but for the persistency that refuses to let go until the petition craved for is given.

I suspect I have been allotting habitually too little time to religious exercises such as private devotion and holy meditation. Scripture reading, etc. Hence, I am lean, cold, and hard. God would prosper me more spiritually if I were to be more diligent in using the means of grace. I had better allot more time, say two hours or an hour and a half, to religious exercises daily, and try whether, by so doing, I cannot preserve a frame of spirit more habitually devotional, a more lively sense of unseen things, a closer love to God, and a greater degree of hunger and thirst after righteousness, a heart less prone to be soiled with worldly cares, designs, passions, and apprehension, and a real genuine longing for heaven, its pleasures, and its purity.

Chapter 7

"Men ought always to pray and not to faint." The words are the words of our Lord, who sought to impress upon His followers the urgency and importance of prayer and set them an example that they have been far too slow to copy.

The always speaks for itself. Prayer is not a meaningless function or duty to be crammed into the busy or weary ends of the day. We are not obeying our Lord's command when we content ourselves with a few minutes on our knees in the morning rush or late at night when the faculties, tired with the tasks of the day, call out for rest. God is always within calling distance, it is true; His ear is attentive to His child's cry, but we can never get to know Him if we use the vehicle of prayer as we use the telephone—for a few words of hurried conversation. Intimacy requires development. We can never know God, as it is our privilege to know Him through brief, incomplete, and unconsidered repetitions of intercessions that are requests for personal favors and nothing more.

That is not how we can come into communication with heaven's King. The goal of prayer is "the ear of God," a goal that can only be reached by a patient, continued, and constant waiting upon Him, pouring out our hearts to Him, and permitting Him to speak to us. Only by so doing can we expect to know Him. As we come to know Him better, we shall spend more time in His presence and find that presence a constant and ever-increasing delight.

Always does not mean that we are to neglect the ordinary duties of life; what it means is that the soul, which has come into intimate contact with God in the silence of the prayer chamber, is never out of conscious touch with the Father, that the heart is always going out to Him in loving communion, and that the moment the mind is released from the task upon which it is engaged, it returns as naturally to God as the bird does to its nest. We get a lovely picture

of prayer when we see it in this light—as a constant fellowship, an unbroken audience with the King! Then, prayer loses any fear it might have had before. We no longer see it as a duty we have to do, but as a privilege, we get to enjoy, a rare pleasure that always shows us something new and beautiful.

Thus, when we open our eyes in the morning, our thoughts instantly turn heavenward. To many Christians, the morning hours are the most precious portion of the day because they provide the opportunity for the holy fellowship that gives the keynote to the day's program. And what better introduction can there be to the never-ceasing glory and wonder of a new day than to spend it alone with God? It is said that Mr. Moody, at a time when no other place was available, kept his morning watch in the coal shed, pouring out his heart to God and finding in his precious Bible a true "feast of fat things."

George Miiller also combined Bible study with prayer in the quiet morning hours. At one time, his practice was to give himself to prayer after getting dressed in the morning. Then his plan underwent a change. As he put it, "I saw the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, and instructed; and that thus, through the Word of God, while meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord."

Therefore, I began meditating on the New Testament early in the morning. The first thing I did, after asking in a few words for the Lord's blessing upon his precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching, as it were, into every verse to get a blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated on, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably thus: that after a very few minutes, my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or

to intercession, or to supplication; so that, though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer.

The study of the Word and prayer go together, and where we find the one indeed practiced, the other is sure to be seen in close alliance.

But we do not pray. That is the trouble with so many of us. We need to pray much more and much longer than we do.

Robert Murray McCheyne, gifted and saintly, of whom it was said, "Whether viewed as a son, a brother, a friend, or a pastor, he was the most faultless and attractive exhibition of the true Christian they had ever seen embodied in a living form," knew what it was to spend much time upon his knees. He never wearied in urging upon others the joy and the value of holy intercession. "God's children should pray," he said. "They should cry day and night unto Him; God hears every one of your cries in the busy hours of the daytime and in the lonely watches of the night." In every way, by preaching, by exhortation when present, and by letters when absent, McCheyne emphasized the vital duty of prayer, importunate and unceasing prayer.

In his diary, we find this: "In the morning, I was engaged in preparing the head, then the heart." This has been a frequent error, and I have always felt the evil of it, especially in prayer. Reform it then, O Lord." While on his trip to the Holy Land, he wrote: "For much of our safety, I feel indebted to the prayers of my people." If the veil of the world's machinery were lifted, how much would we find done in answer to the prayers of God's children? In an ordination sermon, he said to the preacher: "Give yourself to prayers and the ministry of the Word." If you do not pray, God will probably lay you aside from your ministry, as He did with me, to teach you to pray. Remember Luther's maxim, "To have prayed well is to have studied well." Get your texts from God—your

thoughts, your words. Carry the names of the little flock like the High Priest on your breast. Wrestle for the unconverted. Luther spent his last three hours in prayer; John Welch prayed seven or eight hours a day. He used to keep a plaid on his bed that he might wrap himself in when he rose during the night. His wife would occasionally find him on the ground, sobbing. When she complained, he would say, "O, woman, I have the souls of three thousand to answer for, and I know not how it is with many of them." "Pray for your pastor," he implored his audience. Pray for his body to be kept strong and spared many years. Pray for his soul, that he may be kept humble and holy, a burning and shining light. Pray for his ministry—that it be abundantly blessed and that he be anointed to preach good news; no secret prayer without naming him before God; no family prayer without carrying your pastor to God in your hearts.

"He seems never to have stopped cultivating personal holiness and making the most anxious efforts to win souls," his biographer writes. The two are inseparable companions in the ministry of prayer. Prayer fails when the desire and effort for personal holiness fail. No person is a soul winner who is not adept in prayer ministry. "It is the duty of ministers," says this holy man, "to begin the reformation of religion and manner with themselves, their families, etc., with confession of past sin, earnest prayer for direction, grace, and full purpose of heart." He begins with himself under the heading "Reformation in Secret Prayer," and he resolves:

"I ought not to omit prayer parts: confession, adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and intercession." There is a fearful tendency to omit confession, proceeding from low views of God and His law, slight thoughts of my heart, and the sins of my past life. This must be resisted. There is a constant tendency to omit adoration when I need to remember to whom I am speaking when I rush heedlessly into the presence of Jehovah without thought of His awful name or character. When I have little eyesight for his

glory and little admiration for his wonders, I have the natural tendency of the heart to omit giving thanks, yet it is expressly commanded. I often overlook intercession when my heart is dead for the salvation of others. Still, it is primarily the spirit of the great advocate, Who has the name of Israel on His heart. I ought to pray before seeing anyone. Often, when I sleep long or meet with others early and have family prayer and breakfast and forenoon callers, it is eleven or twelve o'clock before I begin secret prayer. This is a wretched system; it is unscriptural. Christ rose before daybreak and went into a solitary place. David says, "Early will I seek thee; thou shalt early hear my voice." Mary Magdalene came to the grave while it was still dark. Family prayer loses much of its power and sweetness, and I can do no good to those who come to seek me out. The conscience feels guilty, the soul is unfed, and the lamp is not trimmed. I think it is far better to begin with God, to see His face first, and to get my soul near Him before it is near another. ""When I awake, I am still with Thee." If I have slept too long, or I am going on an early journey, or my time is shortened, it is best to dress hurriedly and have a few minutes alone with God than to give it all up for the loss. But in general, it is best to have at least one hour alone with God before engaging in anything else. I should spend the best hours of the day in communion with God. "When I wake up in the middle of the night, I should get up and pray like David and John Welch."

McCheyne believed in being constantly in prayer, and his fruitful life, short though it was, affords an illustration of the power that comes from long and frequent visits to the secret place where we keep tryst with our Lord.

Men of McCheyne's stamp are needed today—praying men who know how to give themselves to the most significant task demanding their time and attention; men who can give their whole hearts to the holy task of intercession; men who can pray through. God's cause is committed to men; God commits Himself to men.

Praying men are the vicegerents of God; they do His work and carry out His plans.

We are obliged to pray if we are citizens of God's Kingdom. Prayerlessness is banishment, or worse, from God's Kingdom. It is outlawry, a high crime, and a constitutional breach. The Christian who relegates prayer to a subordinate place in his life soon loses whatever spiritual zeal he may have once possessed. The Church that makes little of prayer cannot maintain vital piety and is powerless to advance the Gospel. Without constant, instant, and ardent prayer, the Gospel cannot live, fight, or conquer.

A little prayer signifies a backslidden age and a backslidden church. Spiritual bankruptcy is imminent and inevitable whenever there is little praying in the pulpit or in the pews.

God's cause has no commercial, cultural, educational, or financial age. But it has one golden age, the age of prayer. God's cause will triumph when its leaders are men of prayer. Prayer is the dominant element of worship, like incense providing constant fragrance to its service.

Better praying and more of it are what we need. We need holier men, and more of them, and holier women, and more of them, to pray—women like Hannah, who brewed their greatest prayers out of their greatest griefs and temptations. Through prayer, Hannah found relief. Everywhere the Church was backslidden and apostate, her foes were victorious. Hannah gave herself to prayer, and in sorrow, she multiplied her praying. She saw a great revival come from her praying. When the whole nation was oppressed, including prophets and priests, Samuel was born to establish a new line of the priesthood, and her praying warmed into a new life for God. Everywhere, religion revived and flourished. God, faithful to His promise, "Ask of Me," even though the prayer came from a woman's broken heart, heard and answered, sending a new day of holy gladness to revive His people.

So once more, let us apply the emphasis and repeat that the great need of the Church in this and all ages are men of such commanding faith, of such unsullied holiness, of such marked spiritual vigor and consuming zeal, that they will work spiritual revolutions through their mighty praying. Natural ability and educational advantages do not figure as factors in this matter, but a capacity for faith, the ability to pray, the power of a thorough consecration, the ability of self-littleness, a total loss of one's self in God's glory, and an ever-present and insatiable yearning and seeking after all the fulness of God. "Men who can set the Church ablaze for God, not in a noisy, showy way, but with an intense and quiet heat that melts and moves everything for God,"

To return to the main point, secret prayer is the litmus test, the gauge, and the protector of man's relationship with God. The prayer chamber, while it is the test of the sincerity of our devotion to God, also becomes the measure of that devotion. Self-denial, sacrifices for our prayer chambers, frequency of visits to that hallowed place of meeting with the Lord, lingering to stay, loathing to leave—these are the values we place on communion alone with God, the price we pay for the Spirit's trying hours of heavenly love.

The prayer chamber conserves our relationship with God. It hems every raw edge; it tucks up every flowing and entangling garment; it girds up every fainting loin. The sheet anchor holds the ship no more surely and safely than the prayer chamber holds God. Satan has to break our hold on him and close our way to the prayer chambers before he can break our hold on God or close our way to heaven.

"Be not afraid to pray; to pray is right;
Pray if you can with hope, but always pray.
Though hope be weak or sick with long delay;
Pray in the darkness if there be no light;
And if for any wish thou dare not pray

Then pray to God to cast that wish away."

In God's name, I urge you to let prayer nourish your soul as your meals nourish your body. Allow your regular prayer times to keep you in God's presence throughout the day, and let His presence be a constant source of inspiration. Such a brief, loving recollection of God renews a man's entire being, calms his passions, supplies light and counsel in difficulty, gradually subdues the temper, and causes him to possess his soul in patience or rather to give it up to God's possession. — Fenelon.

Devoted too much time and attention to the outward and public duties of the ministry. But this is a mistaken attitude because I've learned that neglecting frequent and fervent communion with God in meditation and prayer is not the way to redeem time or prepare for public ministry.

I rightly attribute my present deadness to a want of sufficient time and tranquility for private devotion. I want more reading, retirement, and private devotion, but I need more mastery over my temper. A sad day for me due to a lack of solitude and prayer. If I do anything, if I leave anything undone, let me be perfect in prayer.

After all, whatever God may appoint, prayer is a great thing. Oh, that I may be a man of prayer!—Henry Martyn

Chapter 8

We cannot be sure that the men stopped praying during Paul's time. They have, for the most part, quit praying now. They are too busy to pray. Time, strength, and every faculty are laid out in tribute to money, business, and world affairs. Few men lay themselves out in great prayer. The great business of praying is a hurried, petty, starving, beggarly business with most men.

St. Paul calls a halt and lays a levy on men for prayer. Paul's unfailing remedy for major evils in the church, state, politics, business, and home is to get men to pray. Put the men to praying, politics will be cleansed, the business will be thriftier, the church will be holier, and the home will be sweeter.

"I, therefore, urge, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men; for kings and all in high places; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity. This is acceptable in the eyes of God, our Savior... I, therefore, desire that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath or disputation (1 Timothy 2:1–3, 8).

Praying women and children are invaluable to God. Still, suppose their praying is not supplemented by praying men. In that case, there will be a significant loss in the power of prayer—a great breach and depreciation in the value of prayer, a significant paralysis in the energy of the Gospel. Jesus Christ spoke a parable to the people, telling them that men ought always to pray and not faint. Men who are strong in everything else ought to be strong in prayer and never yield to discouragement, weakness, or depression. Men who are brave, persistent, and redoubtable in other pursuits ought to be courageous, unflinching, and strong-hearted in prayer.

Men are to pray; all men are to pray. Men are distinguished from women by their strength and their wisdom. There is an absolute,

specific command that the men pray; it is an absolute necessity that they pray. The first of all beings, man, should also be first in prayer.

The men are to pray for men. The direction is specific and classified. Just underneath, we have a particular order concerning women. Concerning prayer, its significance, breadth, and practice, the Bible here contrasts and distinguishes men from women. The men are commanded, seriously charged, and warmly urged to pray. Perhaps it was that men were opposed to prayer or indifferent to it; it may be that they deemed it a small thing and gave it neither time nor value nor significance. But God would have all men pray, and so the great Apostle brings the subject to prominence and emphasizes its importance.

Prayer is of transcendent importance. Prayer is the mightiest agent to advance God's work. Praying hearts and hands only can do God's work. Prayer succeeds when all else fails. Prayer has won significant victories and rescued, with notable triumph, God's saints when every other hope was gone. Men who know how to pray are the most tremendous boon God can give to earth—they are the richest gift earth can offer heaven. Men who know how to use this weapon of prayer are God's best soldiers and His mightiest leaders.

Praying men are God's chosen leaders. The distinction between the leaders that God brings to the front to lead and bless His people and those who owe their leadership position to a worldly, selfish, unsanctified selection is that God's leaders are preeminently men of prayer. This marks them out as simple. Divine attestation of their call, the seal of their separation by God. Whatever other graces or gifts they may have, the gift and grace of prayer tower above them all. In whatever else they may share or differ, in the gift of prayer, they are one.

What would God's leaders be without prayer? Strip Moses of his power in prayer, a gift that made him eminent in pagan estimation, and the crown is taken from his head; the food and fire of his faith are gone. Elijah, without his praying, would have neither a record nor a place in the Divine legation, his life would be insipid and cowardly, its energy, defiance, and fire gone. Without Elijah's praying, the Jordan would never have yielded to the stroke of his mantle, nor would the stern angel of death have honored him with the chariot and horses of fire. The argument that God used to quiet the fears and convince Ananias of Paul's condition and sincerity is the epitome of his history and the solution of his life and work—"Behold, he prays."

Paul, Luther, Wesley—what would these chosen ones of God be without the distinguishing and controlling element of prayer? They were God's leaders because they were powerful in prayer. They were leaders not because of their brilliance in thought, exhaustion in resources, magnificent culture, or native endowment, but because they could command the power of God through the power of prayer. Praying men are more than just men who say prayers; they are more than just men who pray out of habit. It means men for whom prayer is a mighty force, an energy that moves heaven and pours untold treasures of godness on earth.

Praying men protect the church from materialism, which affects all of its plans and policies and hardens its lifeblood. The insinuation circulates as a secret, deadly poison: that the Church is not so dependent on purely spiritual forces as it used to be, that changed times and changed conditions have brought it out of its spiritual straits and dependencies and put it where other forces can carry it to its climax. A fatal snare of this kind has allured the Church into worldly embraces, dazzled her leaders, weakened her foundations, and shorn her of much of her beauty and strength. Praying men are the saviors of the Church from this material tendency. They pour the original spiritual forces into it, lift it off the sandbars of

materialism, and press it out into the ocean depths of spiritual power. Praying men keep God in full force in the Church, keeping His hand on the helm and training the Church in its lessons of strength and trust.

The number and efficiency of the laborers in God's vineyard in all lands are dependent on the men of prayer. The mightiness of these men of prayer increases the number and success of consecrated labors through a divinely orchestrated process. Prayer opens wide their doors of access, gives holy aptness to enter, and holy boldness, firmness, and fruitage. Praying men are needed in all fields of spiritual labor. There is no position in the Church of God, high or low, that can be well filled without instant prayer. There is no position where Christians are found that does not demand the full play of a faith that always prays and never faints. Praying men are needed in the house of business as well as in the house of God, that they may order and direct trade, not according to the maxims of this world but according to Bible precepts and the maxims of the heavenly life.

Men of prayer are needed, especially in positions of Church influence, honor, and power. These leaders of Church thought, Church work, and Church life should be men of strong power in prayer. The praying heart sanctifies the labor and skill of the hands and the labor and wisdom of the head. Prayer keeps work in line with God's will and thoughts in line with God's Word. The solemn responsibilities of leadership, in a large or limited sphere, in God's Church should be so hedged about with prayer that between it and the world, there should be an impassable gulf, so elevated and purified by prayer that neither cloud nor night should stain the radiance nor dim the sight of a constant meridian view of God. Many Church leaders seem to think that if they can be prominent as men of business, of money, of influence, of thought, of plans, of scholarly attainments, of eloquent gifts, of conspicuous activities, these are enough and will atone for the absence of the higher

spiritual power that much praying can only give. But how vain and paltry are these in the serious work of bringing glory to God, controlling the Church for Him, and bringing it into full accord with its Divine mission.

Praying men are the men who have done so much for God in the past. They are the ones who have won victories for God and ruined His adversaries. They are the ones who have set up His Kingdom in the very camps of His enemies. There are no other conditions for success in this day. The twentieth century has no relief statute to suspend the necessity or force of prayer—no substitute by which its gracious ends can be secured. To this extent, we are hemmed in; only the work of prayerful hands can construct God's kingdom. They are God's mighty ones on earth, His master builders. They may be destitute of all else, but with the wrestling and victories of a simple-hearted faith, they are mighty, the mightiest for God. Church leaders may be gifted in all else, but without this greatest of gifts, they are as Samson shorn of his locks or as the Temple without the Divine presence or the Divine glory, and on whose altars the heavenly flame has died.

The only protection and rescue from worldliness lie in our intense and radical spirituality, and our only hope for the existence and maintenance of this high, saving spirituality under God is in the purest and most aggressive leadership—a leadership that knows the secret power of prayer, the sign by which the Church has conquered, and that has conscience, conviction, and courage to hold her true to her symbols, true to her traditions, and true to the hidings of her power. We need this kind of prayerful leadership, and we must have it, so that by the perfection and beauty of its holiness, by the strength and height of its faith, by the power and pressure of its prayers, by the authority and purity of its example, by the fire and contagiousness of its zeal, and by the uniqueness, transcendence, and otherworldliness of its piety, it can move God and hold and shape the Church to its heavenly model.

Such leaders, how mightily they are felt. How their flame arouses the Church! How they stir it with the force of their Pentecostal presence! How they embattle and give victory by the conflicts and triumphs of their own faith ! How they shape it through the strength and urgency of their prayers! How they inoculate it with the contagion and fire of their holiness! How they lead the march in great spiritual revolutions! How the Church is raised from the dead by the resurrection call of their sermons! Holiness springs up in their wake as flowers at the voice of spring, and where they tread the desert, it blooms as the garden of the Lord. God's cause demands such leaders along the whole line of official positions, from subaltern to superior. How feeble, aimless, or worldly are our efforts! How demoralized and vain for God's work without them!

The gift of these leaders is not within the range of ecclesiastical power. They are God's gifts. Their being, their presence, their number, and their ability are the tokens of His favor; their lack is the sure sign of His disfavor, the presage of His withdrawal. Let the Church of God be on her knees before the Lord of Hosts, that He mightily endow the leaders we already have, put others in rank, and lead all along the line of our embattled front.

The world is coming into the Church at many points and in many ways. It oozes in; it pours in; it comes in with a bold front or a soft, insinuating disguise; it comes in at the top and bottom; and percolates through many a hidden way.

We are looking for praying men and holy men whose presence in the Church will make it like a censer of holy incense flaming up to God. With God, a man counts for everything. Rituals, forms, and organizations are of little moment; unless they are backed by the holiness of the man, they are offensive in His sight. "Incense is an abomination to Me. "The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot tolerate; even the solemn meeting is iniquity."

Why does God speak so strongly against His own ordinances? Personal purity had failed. The impure man tainted all the sacred institutions of God and defiled them. God regards man in such a significant way as to put a kind of discount on all else. Men have built Him glorious temples and have striven and exhausted themselves trying to please God with all manner of gifts. Still, in lofty strains, He has rebuked these proud worshippers and rejected their princely gifts.

"Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool; where is your house that you have built for Me?" And where is my resting place? "For all those things have been made by My hand, and all those things have been," says the Lord. "He that killed an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrifices a lamb is as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offered an oblation is as if he offered swine's blood; he that burns incense is as if he blessed an idol." Turning away in disgust from these costly and profane offerings. He declares: "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word."

This truth is that God regards the personal purity of man as fundamental. This truth suffers when ordinances are made abundant, and forms of worship multiply. The man and his spiritual character depreciate as Church ceremonials increase. The simplicity of prayer is lost in religious aesthetics or the gaudiness of religious forms.

This truth, that the personal purity of the individual is the only thing God cares for, is lost sight of when the Church begins to estimate men for what they have. When the Church eyes a man's money, Social standing, or belongings in any way, then spiritual values are at a fearful discount, and the tears of penitence and the heaviness of guilt are never seen at her portals. Worldly bribes have opened and stained its pearly gates by the entrance of the impure.

When the church is greedy for numbers, the truth that God is concerned with personal purity is swallowed up. "Not numbers but personal purity is our aim," said the fathers of Methodism. The parading of Church statistics is mightily against the grain of spiritual religion. Eyeing numbers greatly hinders the pursuit of personal purity. An increase in quantity is accompanied by a decrease in quality. Bulk erodes preciousness.

The age of Church organization and Church machinery is not an age noted for elevated and strong personal piety. Machinery looks to engineers and organizations for generals, not saints, to run them. The simplest organization may aid purity as well as strength, but beyond that narrow "limit," organization swallows up the individual and is careless of personal purity; push, activity, enthusiasm, and zeal for an organization come in as the vicious substitutes for spiritual character. Holiness and all the spiritual graces of hardy culture and slow growth are discarded as too slow and too costly for the progress and rush of the age. By dint of machinery, new organizations, and spiritual weakness, results are vainly expected to be secured, which can only be secured by faith, prayer, and waiting on God.

The man and his spiritual character are what God is looking for. If men—holy men—can be turned out by the easy processes of Church machinery that are better and better than the old-time processes, we would gladly invest in every new and improved patent; but we do not believe it. We adhere to the old way—the way the holy prophets went, the king's highway of holiness.

An example of this is afforded by the case of William Wilberforce. He was a member of Parliament and a friend of Pitt, the famous statesman, and he was not called by God to give up his high social position or quit Parliament, but he was called to order his life according to the pattern set by Jesus Christ and to devote himself to prayer. To read the story of his life is to be impressed with its

holiness and its devotion to the claims of the quiet hours alone with God. His conversion was announced to his friends—to Pitt and others—by letter.

In the beginning of his religious career, he records: "My chief reasons for a day of secret prayer are: (1) that the state of public affairs is very critical and calls for earnest deprecation of the Divine displeasure." (2) My station in life is a very difficult one, wherein I am at a loss for knowing how to act. Direction, therefore, should be specially sought from time to time. (3) I have been graciously supported in difficult situations of a public nature. I have gone out and returned home in safety, and I found a kind reception had attended me. I would humbly hope, too, that what I am now doing is a proof that God has not withdrawn His Holy Spirit from me. "I am covered with mercies."

His birthday recurrence led him to review his situation and employment again. "I find," he wrote, "that books alienate my heart from God as much as anything." "I have been framing a plan of study for myself, but let me remember that one thing is necessary: if my heart cannot be kept in a spiritual state without so much prayer and meditation, Scripture reading, etc., as they are incompatible with study, I must seek first the righteousness of God." All were to be surrendered for spiritual advancement. "I fear," we find him saying, "that I have not studied the Scriptures enough." Indeed, in the summer recess, I ought to read the Scriptures for an hour or two every day, besides prayer, devotional reading, and meditation. God will prosper me more if I wait on Him. The experience of all good men shows that without constant prayer and watchfulness, the life of God in the soul stagnates. Doddridge's morning and evening devotions were serious matters. Colonel Gardiner always spent hours in prayer in the morning before he went forth. Bonnell practiced private devotions mainly in the morning and evening and repeated Psalms while dressing and undressing to raise his mind to heavenly things. I would look to

God to make the means effective. I fear that my devotions are too hurried and that I do not read Scripture enough. I must grow in grace and love God more; I must feel the power of Divine things more. It makes no difference whether I am more or less educated. Whether I even execute the work that I deem useful is comparatively unimportant. But beware my soul of lukewarmness."

The New Year began with Holy Communion and the taking of new vows. "I will press forward," he wrote, "and labor to know God better and love Him more." Assuredly I may, because God will give His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him, and the Holy Spirit will shed abroad the love of God in the heart. "O, then, pray, pray; be earnest, press forward, and follow on to know the Lord." "Without watchfulness, humiliation, and prayer, the sense of Divine things must languish." To prepare for the future, he said he found nothing more effective than private prayer and a serious perusal of the New Testament.

And again, "I must say that I have lately had too little time for private devotions." I can sadly confirm Doddridge's observation that when we get sick in the closet, we usually get sick everywhere else. I must mend here. I am afraid of getting into what Owen calls the trade of sinning and repenting. Lord, help me. The shortening of private devotions starves the soul; it grows lean and faint. This must not be. I must redeem more time. "I see how lean in spirit I become without full allowance of time for private devotions; I must be careful to be watching unto prayer."

At another time, he puts it on record: "I must try what I long ago heard was the rule of the great upholsterer, who, when he came from Bond Street to his little villa, always first retired to his closet." I have been keeping too late hours, and hence have had only a hurried half hour to myself. "Surely, the experience of all

good men confirms the proposition that the soul will grow lean without the proper measure of private devotions."

"Let me conjure you not to be seduced into neglecting, curtailing, or hurrying over your morning prayers," he wrote to his son. Of all things, guard against neglecting God in "the closet." There is nothing more fatal to the life and power of religion. "More solitude and earlier hours—prayer three times a day at least." "How much better might I serve if I cultivated a closer communion with God?"

Wilberforce knew the secret of a holy life. Is that not where most of us fail? We are so busy with other things, so immersed even in doing good and carrying on the Lord's work, that we neglect the quiet seasons of prayer with God. Before we are aware of it, our soul is lean and impoverished.

"One night alone in prayer," says Spurgeon, "might make us new men, changed from poverty of soul to spiritual wealth, from trembling to triumphing." We have an example of it in the life of Jacob. Before the crafty shuffler, always bargaining and calculating were unlovely in almost every respect. Yet, one night in prayer, God turned the supplanter into a prevailing prince and robed him with celestial grandeur. From that night on, he lives on the sacred page as one of the nobility of heaven. Could not we, at least now and then, in these weary earthbound years, hedge about a single night for such enriching traffic in the skies? What, have we no sacred ambition? Are we deaf to the yearnings of Divine love? Yet, my brethren, for wealth and for science, men will cheerfully quit their warm couches, and cannot we do it now and again for the love of God and the good of souls? Where are our zeal, our gratitude, and our sincerity? I am ashamed while I thus upbraid both myself and you. May we often linger at Jabbok and weep with Jacob as he grasped the angel, saying, "With thee all night I intend to stay, And wrestle till the break of day."

Surely, brethren, if we have given whole days to folly, we can afford a space for heavenly wisdom. We did not tire when we gave whole nights to chambering and wantonness, dancing, and the world's revelry; we were cursing the sun for rising so early and wishing the hours would lag a while so that we could delight in wilder merriment and perhaps deeper sin. OH, why should we tire in our heavenly labors? Why grow weary when asked to watch with our Lord? "I rise and go forth to meet the Heavenly Friend in the place where He manifests Himself," Jesus says to the sluggish heart.

We can never expect to grow in the likeness of our Lord unless we follow His example and give more time to communion with the Father. A revival of real prayer would produce a spiritual revolution.

Bear up the hands that hang down, by faith and prayer; support the tottering knees. Have you had any days of fasting and prayer? Storm the throne of grace and persevere, and mercy will descend.— John Wesley

We must remember that the goal of prayer is the ear of God. Unless that is gained, the prayer has utterly failed. The uttering of it may have kindled a devotional feeling in our minds. Hearing it may have comforted and strengthened the hearts of those with whom we have prayed, but if the prayer has not gained the heart of God, it has failed in its essential purpose.

A mere formalist can always pray to please himself. What has he to do but open his book and read the prescribed words or bow his knee and repeat such phrases as suggest themselves to his memory or his fancy? Like the Tartarian Praying Machine, give, but the wind, the wheel, and the business are thoroughly arranged. So much knee-bending and talking, and the prayer is done. The formalist's prayers are always good or, rather, always bad. But the living child of God never offers a prayer that pleases himself; his

standard is above his attainments; he wonders that God listens to him, and though he knows he will be heard for Christ's sake, yet he accounts it a remarkable instance of condescending mercy that such poor prayers as he should ever reach the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth. —C. H. Spurgeon

Chapter 9

It may be said with emphasis that no lazy saint prays. Can there be a lazy saint? Can there be a prayerless saint? Does slack praying not shorten the crown and kingdom of sainthood? Can there be a cowardly soldier? Can there be a saintly hypocrite? Can there be a virtuous vice? It is only when these impossibilities are brought into being that we can find a prayerless saint.

To go through the motions of praying is a dull business, though not a hard one. To say prayers in a decent, delicate way is not heavy work. Prayer is hard work, but it is God's work and man's best labor. To pray truly is to pray until hell feels the ponderous stroke, until the iron gates of difficulty are opened, until the mountains of obstacles are removed, until the mists are exhaled, the clouds are lifted, and the sunshine of a cloudless day brightens. Never was the toil of hand, head, and heart less spent in vain than when praying. It is hard to wait and press and pray and hear no voice, but stay till God answers. The joy of an answered prayer is like the joy of a travailing mother when a male child is born into the world or the joy of a slave whose chains have been burst asunder and to whom new life and liberty have just come.

A bird's-eye view of what has been accomplished by prayer shows what we lost when the dispensation of real prayer was substituted by Pharisaical pretense and sham; it also shows how imperative the need is for holy men and women who will give themselves to earnest, Christlike praying.

It is not an easy thing to pray. All of the conditions of prayer must be present behind praying. These conditions are possible, but they are not to be seized on in a moment by the prayerless. They are always present to the faithful and holy. Still, they cannot exist or be met by a frivolous, negligent, or sluggish spirit. Prayer does not stand alone. It is not a solo performance. Prayer is closely

connected to all the duties of ardent piety. The issuance of a character is made up of the elements of a vigorous and commanding faith. Prayer honors God, acknowledges His being, exalts His power, adores His providence, and secures His aid. A sneering half-rationalism cries out against devotion, saying it does nothing but pray. But praying well entails doing everything well. If it is true that devotion does nothing but pray, then it does nothing at all. To do nothing but pray fails to do the praying, for the antecedent, coincident, and subsequent conditions of prayer are but the sum of all the energizing forces of practical, working piety.

The possibilities of prayer run parallel with the promises of God. Prayer opens an outlet for the promises, removes the hindrances in the way of their execution, puts them into working order, and secures their gracious ends. More than this, prayerlike faith obtains promises, enlarges their operation, and adds to the measure of their results. God's promises were to Abraham and to his seed, but many a barren womb, and many a minor obstacle stood in the way of the fulfilment of these promises; but prayer removed them all, made a highway for the promises, added to the facility and speediness of their realization, and by prayer the promise shone bright and perfect in its execution.

The possibilities of prayer are found in its allying itself with God's purposes; for God's purposes and man's praying are the combination of all potent and omnipotent forces. More than this, the possibilities of prayer are seen in the fact that it changes the purposes of God. It is in the very nature of prayer to plead and give directions. Prayer is not a negation. It is a positive force. It never rebels against the will of God and never comes into conflict with that will, but it does seek to change God's purpose is evident. Christ said, "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" And yet He had prayed that very night, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." Paul sought to change the purposes of God regarding the thorn in his flesh. God's purpose was fixed to

destroy Israel, and the prayer of Moses changed the purpose of God and saved Israel. In the time of the Judges, Israel was apostate and greatly oppressed. They repented and cried unto God, and He said: "Ye have forsaken Me and served other gods, wherefore I will deliver you no more: " but they humbled themselves, put away their strange gods, and God's " soul was grieved for the misery of Israel," and he sent them deliverance by Jephthah.

"Set your house in order, for thou shalt die and not live," God told Hezekiah through Isaiah. Hezekiah prayed, and God sent Isaiah to say, "I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your days." "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," was God's message by Jonah. But Nineveh cried mightily to God, and "God repented of the evil that He had said He would do unto them, and He did not do it."

The possibilities of prayer are seen in the diverse conditions it reaches and the diverse ends it secures. Elijah prayed over a dead child, and it returned to life; Elisha did the same; Christ prayed at Lazarus' grave, and Lazarus arose. Peter kneeled down and prayed beside dead Dorcas, and she opened her eyes and sat up. Peter presented her alive to the distressed company. Paul prayed for Publius and healed him. Jacob's praying changed Esau's murderous hate into the kisses of the tenderest brotherly embrace. God gave to Rebecca, Jacob, and Esau because Isaac prayed for her. Joseph was the child of Rachel's prayers. Hannah's praying gave Samuel to Israel. John the Baptist was given to Elizabeth, barren and past childbearing age as she was, in answer to the prayer of Zacharias. Elisha's praying brought famine or harvest to Israel; as he prayed, so it was. Ezra's prayer carried the Spirit of God in heartbreaking conviction to the entire city of Jerusalem. It brought them tears of repentance back to God. Isaiah's prayer carried the sun's shadow back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz.

In answer to Hezekiah's prayer, an angel slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand of Sennacherib's army in one night. Daniel's praying opened to him the vision of prophecy, helped him administer the affairs of a mighty kingdom, and sent an angel to shut the lions' mouths. The angel was sent to Cornelius, and the Gospel opened through him to the Gentile world because his "prayers and alms had come up as a memorial before God." "And what else can I say?" For time would run out if I told you about Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah; of David and Samuel and the prophets; of Paul and Peter and John and the Apostles; and the holy company of saints, reformers, and martyrs who, through prayer, "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

Prayer puts God in the matter with commanding force: "Ask of Me things to come concerning My sons," says God, "and concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me." In God's Word, we are commanded to "always pray," "in everything by prayer," "continue instantly in prayer," and "pray everywhere." The promise is as limitless as the command is comprehensive. "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive," "whatever ye shall ask," "if ye shall ask anything." "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." "Whatever you ask of the Father, He will give you." If there is anything not involved in "all things whatsoever" or not found in the phrase "ask anything," then these things may be left out of prayer. Language could not cover a broader range or include every detail. These statements are but samples of the all-encompassing possibilities of prayer under the promises of God to those who meet the conditions of right praying.

These passages, though, give only a general outline of the immense regions over which prayer extends its sway. Beyond these, prayer has effects and brings good to places that cannot be reached through language or thought.

Paul exhausted language and thought in praying, but conscious of necessities not covered and realms of good not reached, he covers these impenetrable and undiscovered regions with this general plea: "unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." The promise is, "Call upon Me, and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knows not."

James declares that "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availed much." How much he could not tell, but he illustrates it by the power of Old Testament praying to stir up New Testament saints to imitate the fervor and influence of their praying and duplicate and surpass the power of the holy men of old. Elijah, he says, was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

In the Revelation of John, the whole lower order of God's creation and His providential government, the Church and the angelic world, are in the attitude of waiting on the efficiency of the prayers of the saintly ones on earth to carry on the various interests of earth and heaven. The angel takes the fire kindled by prayer and casts it earthward; "and there were voices, and thundering, and lightnings, and an earthquake." Prayer is the force that creates all these alarms, stirs, and throes. "Ask of Me," says God to His Son and to the Church of His Son, "and I shall give thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possessions."

The men who have done mighty things for God have always been powerful in prayer, have understood the possibilities of prayer, and have made the most of these possibilities. The Son of God, the first and the mightiest of all, has shown us prayer's all-potent and far-reaching potential. Paul was powerful for God because he knew how to use and get others to use the powerful spiritual forces of prayer.

The seraphim, burning, sleepless, and adoring, are the figures of prayer. It is resistless in its ardor, devoted, and tireless. There are hindrances to prayer that nothing but a pure, intense flame can surmount. There are toils, outlays, and endurance that only the most fervent flame can withstand. Prayer may be low-tongued, but it cannot be cold-tongued. Its words may be few, but they must be on fire. Its feelings may not be impetuous, but they must be white with heat. It is effective, fervent prayer that influences God.

God's house is the house of prayer, and God's work is the work of prayer. God's house and God's work are made glorious by zeal for God's house and zeal for God's work.

When the saints' prayer chambers are closed or entered casually or coldly, the Church rulers are secular, fleshly, and worldly; their spiritual character sinks to a low level, and the ministry becomes restrained and enfeebled.

When prayer fails, the world prevails. When prayer fails, the Church loses its Divine characteristics and its Divine power; the Church is swallowed up by a proud ecclesiasticism, and the world scoffs at its apparent impotence.

I look upon all the four Gospels as thoroughly genuine, for there is in them the reflection of a greatness that emanated from the person of Jesus and which is of as Divine a kind as ever was seen on earth.
— Goethe.

There are no possibilities, no necessity for prayerless praying, a heartless performance, a senseless routine, a dead habit, a hasty, careless performance—it justifies nothing. Prayerless praying has no life, gives no life, is dead, and breathes out death. Not a battle axe but a child's toy, for play, not for service. Prayerless praying does not come up to the importance and aims of recreation. In the hour of struggle, of intense conflict, a call to retreat in the moment of battle or victory, prayerless praying is only a burden, an impediment.

Chapter 10

Why do we not pray? What are the hindrances to prayer? This is not a curious or trivial question. It goes not only to the whole matter of our praying but to the whole matter of our religion. Religion is bound to decline when praying is hindered. That which hinders prayer inhibits religion. He who is too busy to pray will be too busy to live a holy life.

Other duties become pressing and absorbing and crowd out prayer. Choked to death would be the coroner's verdict in many cases of dead praying if an inquest could be secured on this dire spiritual calamity. This way of hindering prayer becomes so natural, easy, and innocent that it comes to us all unaware. It will always be done if we allow our praying to be crowded out. Satan would rather we let the grass grow on the path to our prayer chamber than do anything else. A closed chamber of prayer means going out of business religiously or, worse, making an assignment and carrying on our religion in some other name than God's and to somebody else's glory. God's glory is only secured in the business of religion by carrying that religion on with a significant capital of prayer. The apostles understood this when they declared that their time should not be spent on even the sacred duties of alms-giving; instead, they should devote themselves "constantly to prayer and to the ministry of the Word," with prayer coming first. The ministry of the Word draws its efficiency and life from prayer.

The process of crowding out prayer is simple and progresses in stages. First, prayer is hurried through. Unrest and agitation, fatal to all devout exercises, come in. Then the time is shortened, and you relish for the exercise palls. Then it is crammed into a chamber and forced to exercise in short bursts of time. Its value depreciates. The duty has lost its importance. It no longer commands respect nor brings benefit. It has fallen out of favor, out of the heart, out of

the habits, and out of the life. We cease to pray and cease to live spiritually.

Prayer is the only way to stop the desolating floods of worldliness, business, and caring. Christ meant this when He charged us to watch and pray. There is no pioneering corps for the Gospel other than prayer. Paul knew that when he declared that "night and day he prayed exceedingly that we might see your face and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith." There is no arrival at a high state of grace without much praying and no staying in those high altitudes without extraordinary praying. Epaphras knew this when he "labored fervently in prayers" for the Colossian Church, "that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

The only way to keep our praying from being hindered is to estimate prayer at its true and great value. Estimate it as Daniel did, who, when he "knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being opened to Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime." "Put praying among the high values, as Daniel did, above place, honor, ease, wealth, and life." Put praying into the habits, as Daniel did. "As he did aforetime" has much in it to give firmness and fidelity in the hour of trial; much in it to remove hindrances and master opposing circumstances.

One of Satan's wiliest tricks is to destroy the best with the good. Business and other duties are good, but we are so filled with them that they crowd out and destroy the best. Prayer holds the citadel for God, and if Satan can weaken prayer, he is a winner. When prayer is dead, the citadel is taken. We must keep praying as the faithful sentinel keeps guard with sleepless vigilance. We must not keep it half-starved and feeble as a baby, but we must keep it in tremendous strength. Our prayer chamber should have our freshest

power and our calmest time. Its hours should be unfettered, without obtrusion or haste.

"To kneel upon our knees three times a day and pray and give thanks before God as we did aforetime" is the very heart and soul of religion, and it makes men like Daniel "men of an excellent spirit" and "greatly beloved in heaven."

The greatness of prayer, involving as it does the whole man in its most intense form, is not realized without spiritual discipline. This makes it hard work, and before this exacting and consuming effort, our spiritual sloth or feebleness stands abashed.

The simplicity of prayer and its child-like elements form a significant obstacle to faithful praying. Intellect gets in the way of the heart. The child spirit is only the spirit of prayer. It is no holiday occupation to make a man a child again. In song, poetry, and memory, he may wish himself a child again, but in prayer, he must be a child again in reality. At his mother's knee, artless, sweet, intense, direct, and trustful With no shade of doubt and no temper to be denied, a desire that burns and consumes can only be voiced by a cry. It is no easy work to have this childlike spirit of prayer.

If praying were only an hour in the closet, difficulties would face and hinder even that hour, but praying is the whole life spent preparing for the closet. How difficult it is to cover home and business, all the sweetness and all the bitterness of life, with the holy atmosphere of the closet! A holy life is the only preparation for prayer. It is just as difficult to pray as it is to live a holy life. In this, we find a wall of exclusion built around our closets: men do not love holy praying because they do not love and will not do holy living. Montgomery sets forth the difficulties of faithful praying when he declares the sublimity and simplicity of prayer.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech. That infant lips can try.
Prayer is the sublime strains that reach The Majesty on high.

This is not only good poetry but a profound truth as to the loftiness and simplicity of prayer. There are great difficulties in reaching the exalted, angelic strains of prayer. The difficulty of coming down to the simplicity of infant lips is not much less.

Prayer in the Old Testament is called wrestling. Conflict, skill, and strenuous, exhaustive effort are involved. In the New Testament, we have the terms striving, laboring fervently, fervent, effectual, and agony, all indicating intense effort put forth and difficulties overcome. We, in our praises, sing out, "What various hindrances we meet in coming to a mercy seat."

We have also learned that the good things that happen when we pray are usually proportional to the effort we put into getting rid of the things that get in the way of our soul's high communion with God.

Christ spoke a parable to this end, saying that men ought always to pray and not to faint. The parable of the importunate widow teaches the difficulties in praying, how they are to be surmounted, and the happy results that follow from valiant praying. As long as it is true that "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint on his knees," difficulties will always obstruct the path to the closet.

Courageous faith is made stronger and purer by mastering difficulties. These difficulties but couch the eye of faith on the glorious prize that is to be won by the successful wrestler in prayer. Men must not faint in the contest of prayer, but to this high and holy work they must give themselves, despite the difficulties in the way, and experience more than an angel's happiness in the results. Luther said: "To have prayed well is to have studied well." More than that, to have prayed well is to have fought well. "To

have prayed well is to have lived well." "To pray well is to die well."

Prayer is a rare gift, not a popular, ready gift. Prayer is not the fruit of natural talents; it is the product of faith, holiness, and profoundly spiritual character. Men learn to pray as they learn to love. Perfection in simplicity, in humility, and in faith—these are its chief ingredients. Novices in these graces are not adepts in prayer. It cannot be seized upon by untrained hands; only graduates of heaven's highest school of art can touch its finest keys and raise its sweetest, highest notes. Fine material and finish are requisites. Master workers are required, for mere journeymen cannot execute the work of prayer.

The spirit of prayer should rule our spirits and our conduct. The prayer chamber's spirit must rule our lives, or the next hour will be dull and sapless. Always praying in the spirit and acting in the spirit of praying make our praying strong. The spirit of each moment is what gives the closet communion its strength. It is what we bring out of the closet that provides victory or brings defeat to the closet. If the spirit of the world prevails in our non-closet hours, the spirit of the world will succeed in our closet hours, which will be a vain and idle farce.

If we are to meet God in the closet, we must live for God outside of the closet. We must bless God by praying lives if we would have God's blessing in the closet. We must do God's will in our lives if we want to have God's ear in the closet. We must listen to God's voice in public if we want God to listen to our voice in private. God must have our hearts out of the closet if we are to have God's presence in the closet. If we would have God in the closet, God must have us out of the closet. There is no other way to pray to God other than by living for him. Simply put, the closet is a place of holy communion and high and sweet intercession—intense intercession.

Men would pray better if they lived better. They would receive more from God if they lived more obedient and pleasing lives. We would have more strength and time for the Divine work of intercession if we did not have to expend so much strength and time settling up old scores and paying our delinquent taxes. Our spiritual liabilities outnumber our spiritual assets to the point where our closet time is spent negotiating a bankruptcy decree rather than being a time of great spiritual wealth for us and others. Our closets are too much like the sign, "Closed for Repairs."

John said of primitive Christian praying, "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things which are pleasing in His sight." We should note what illimitable grounds were covered and what illimitable gifts were received by their intense praying: "Whatsoever"—how comprehensive the range and reception of mighty praying; how suggestive the reasons for the ability to pray and to have prayers answered—obedience—but more than that, doing things that please God well. They went to their closets, made strong by their strict obedience and loving fidelity to God in their conduct. Their lives were not only faithful and obedient, but they were thinking about things above obedience, searching for and doing something to make God glad. These people can meet their Father in the closet with eager steps and a bright face, not just to be forgiven but to be approved and to receive.

It makes a big difference whether we come to God as a criminal or as a child, to be forgiven or approved, to settle scores or to be accepted, for punishment or for favor. For our praying to be strong, it must be buttressed by holy living. The name of Christ must be honored by our lives before it will honor our intercessions. The life of faith perfects the prayer of faith.

Our lives not only give color to our praying, but they give body to it as well. Bad living makes for bad praying. We pray feebly

because we live feebly. The stream of prayer cannot rise higher than the fountain of living. The closet force is made up of the energy that flows from life's intersecting streams. The feebleness of living confines it to closet homes. We cannot speak strongly to God if we have not lived strongly for him. The closet cannot be made holy to God if the life has not been made holy to God. The Word of God emphasizes our conduct as giving value to our praying. "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say." Here I am. If thou take away the yoke, extending the finger, and speaking vanity from within thee,

Men are to pray by "lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting." We are to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear if we would call on the Father. We cannot separate prayer from behavior. "Whatever we ask, we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." "Ye ask and do not receive because you ask incorrectly, in order to consume it on your lusts. "The injunction of Christ, "Watch and pray," is to cover and guard our conduct so that we may come to our closets with all the force secured by a vigilant guard over our lives.

Our religion manifests itself most often and tragically in our behavior. "Beautiful theories are marred by ugly lives." The most difficult, as well as the most impressive, point of piety is to live it. Our praying suffers as much as our religion from bad living. Preachers were charged in primitive times to preach with their lives or not at all. So Christians everywhere ought to be charged to pray with their lives or not at all. Of course, the prayer of repentance is acceptable. However, repentance means ceasing to do wrong and learning to do right. A repentance that does not produce a change in behavior is a sham. Praying that does not result in pure conduct is a delusion. We have missed the entire office and the virtue of praying if it does not correct behavior. It is

in the nature of things for us to stop praying or engaging in bad behavior.

Cold, dead praying may exist with bad conduct, but cold, dead praying is not praying in God's esteem. Our prayer gains strength as it corrects our lives. A life growing in purity and devotion will be a more prayerful one.

The pity is that so much of our praying is without object or aim. It is without purpose. How much praying there is by people who never abide in Christ—hurried praying, sweet praying full of sentiment, pleasing praying, but not backed by a life wedded to Christ. Popular praying! How much of this praying is from unsanctified hearts and unhallowed lips! Prayers spring into life under the influence of some great excitement, some pressing emergencies, some popular clamor, and some great peril. But the conditions for prayer are not there. We rush into God's presence and try to link Him to our cause, inflame Him with our passions, and move Him at our peril. All things are to be prayed for—but with clean hands, with absolute deference to God's will, and abiding in Christ. Prayerless praying is characterized by untrained lips and hearts, as well as lives that are out of sync with Jesus Christ; prayerless praying, which has the form and motion of prayer but lacks the sincere heart of prayer, never moves God to respond. It is of such praying that James says: "Ye have not because you ask not; you ask and receive not because you ask amiss."

The two greatest evils are asking incorrectly and not asking correctly. Perhaps the greater evil is wrong asking because it has the appearance of duty done, of praying when no praying has occurred—a deception, a fraud, a sham. The times of the most prayer are not really the times of the best prayer. The Pharisees prayed much, but they were actuated by vanity; their praying symbolized their hypocrisy, by which they made God's house of

prayer a den of robbers. Theirs was praying on state occasions—mechanical, perfunctory, professional, beautiful in words, fragrant in sentiment, well ordered, well received by the ears that heard, but utterly devoid of every element of genuine prayer.

The conditions of prayer are well ordered and clear: abiding in Christ and in His name. One of the first necessities, if we are to grasp the infinite possibilities of prayer, is to get rid of prayerless praying. It is often beautiful in words and in execution; it has the drapery of prayer in a rich and costly form, but it lacks the soul of praying. It's so easy for us to get into the habit of serving without praying and just going through the motions.

If men only prayed on all occasions and in every place where they went through the motions! If there were only holy, inflamed hearts behind all these beautiful words and gracious forms! If there were always uplifted hearts in these erect men who are uttering flawless but vain words before God! If there were always reverent, bent hearts when bended knees are uttering words before God to please men's ears!

There is nothing that will preserve the life of prayer—its vigor, sweetness, obligations, seriousness, and value—so much as a deep conviction that prayer is an approach to God, a pleading with God, an asking of God. Reality will then be in it; reverence will then be in the attitude, in the place, and in the air. Faith will draw, kindle, and open. Formality and deadness cannot live in this high and all-serious home of the soul.

Prayerless praying lacks the essential elements of true prayer; it is not based on desire and is devoid of earnestness and faith. Desire burdens the chariot of prayer, and faith drives its wheels. There is no burden in prayerless praying because there is no sense of need; there is no ardency because there is no vision, strength, or glow of faith. There was no tremendous pressure to pray, no deathless, despairing grip on God: "I will not let Thee go unless Thou bless

me." No utter self-abandon, lost in the throes of a desperate, pertinacious, and consuming plea: "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of Thy book;" or, "Give me Scotland, or I die." Prayerless prayer has no stake in the issue because it has nothing to lose. It comes with empty hands, indeed, but they are listless hands as well. They have never learned the lesson of empty hands clutching the cross; it has no form or beauty for them.

Prayerless prayer has no heart in its praying. The lack of compassion deprives praying of its reality and makes it an empty and unfit vessel. Heart, soul, and life must be in our praying; the heavens must feel the force of our crying and be brought into oppressed sympathy for our bitter and needy state. A need that oppresses us and has no other solution but to cry out to God must be expressed in our prayers.

Insincere prayer is prayerless prayer. It has no honesty at heart. We name in words what we do not want in our hearts. Our prayers give formal utterance to the things for which our hearts are not only not hungry, but for which they really have no taste. We once heard an eminent and saintly preacher, now in heaven, come abruptly and sharply on a congregation that had just risen from prayer with the question and statement, "What did you pray for?" If God grabbed you and shook you, demanding what you prayed for, you couldn't tell Him to save your life what the prayer that had just died from your lips was. Prayerless prayer has no memory or heart.

Prayerless praying is a mere form, a heterogeneous mass, an insipid compound, a mixture thrown together for sound and to fill up, but with no heart or aim. This prayerless praying is a dry routine, a dreary drudge, and a dull and heavy task.

Prayerless praying, on the other hand, is far worse than either task or drudge; it separates praying from living; it speaks against the world while confronting it with heart and life. It prays for humility

but nurtures pride; it prays for self-denial while indulging the flesh. Nothing outperforms true prayer in terms of gracious results, but it is better not to pray at all than to pray prayerless prayers, for they are sinning, and the worst kind of sinning is sin on our knees.

The prayer habit is a good habit, but praying by dint of habit only is an awfully bad habit. This kind of praying is neither conditioned by God's order nor generated by God's power. It is not only a waste, a perversion, and a delusion, but it is a prolific source of unbelief. Prayerless praying gets no results. God is not reached, and the self is not helped. It is better not to pray at all than to secure no results from praying. Better for the pray-er, better for others. Men hear of the prodigious results that are to be secured by prayer—the matchless good promised in God's Word to prayer. These keen-eyed worldlings or timid little believers notice the large disparity between the results promised and the results realized and are forced to question the truth and worth of that which is so grand in promise but so meager in results. Religion and God are disgraced, and doubt and unbelief are strengthened by much asking and no getting.

In contrast, what a powerful force prayerful prayer is! Real prayer helps God and man. It advances God's Kingdom. The greatest good comes to man by it. Prayer can do anything that God can do. The pity is that we do not believe this as we ought and do not put it to the test.

The Church's most important thing right now is not physical or external; the most crucial need is spiritual. Work done without prayer will never bring the kingdom of God closer. We do not pray in the manner that is expected of us. Infrequently, we go into the anteroom, close the door, and spend some time praying. The kingdom's concerns are putting a lot of pressure on us, and we need to pray about it. Giving that does not include prayer will never evangelize the globe. — Dr. A. J. Gordon

The great subject of prayer, that comprehensive need of the Christian's life, is intimately wrapped up in the personal fulness of the Holy Spirit. We have "access unto the Father by the one Spirit" [Eph. ii. i8], and by the same Spirit, having entered the audience chamber through the "new and living way", we are able to pray in God's will [Rom. via. 15, 26, 27; Eph. vi. 18; Jude 20–21].

Here is the secret of prevailing prayer: to pray under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, whose petitions for us and through us are always according to the Divine purpose and hence sure of an answer. "Praying in the Holy Spirit" simply cooperates with God's will, and such prayer is always successful. How many Christians cannot pray and seek, by effort, resolve, joining prayer circles, etc., to cultivate in themselves the "holy art of intercession," all to no purpose. Here for them and all is the only secret of a real prayer life: "Be filled with the Spirit," who is " the Spirit of grace and supplication." — Reverend J. Stuart Holden, M.A.

Chapter 11

The preceding chapter closed with the statement that prayer can do anything that God can do. It is a tremendous statement to make, but it is a statement borne out by history and experience. If we are abiding in Christ — and if we abide in Him, we are living in obedience to His holy will — and approach God in His name, then there lie open before us the infinite resources of the Divine treasure house.

The man who truly prays receives from God many things that the prayerless man does not. The goal of all genuine prayer is to obtain the object prayed for, just as a child's cry for bread has as its goal the acquisition of bread. This view removes prayer cleanly from the sphere of religious performances. Prayer is not acting out a part or going through religious motions. Prayer is neither officious, formal, nor ceremonial but direct, hearty, and intense. Prayer is not religious work that must be done; it is effective because it is done well. Prayer is the helpless and needy child crying out to the Father's compassion and the bounty and power of his hand. The answer is as sure to come as the Father's heart can be touched and the Father's hand moved.

The object of asking is to receive. The aim of seeking is to find. The purpose of knocking is to arouse attention and get in. This is Christ's iterated and re-iterated assertion that the prayer will, without doubt, be answered. Its end was secured, not in some roundabout way, but by getting the things asked for.

The value of prayer is found not in the number or length of prayers but in the great truth that we are privileged by our relationships with God to unburden our desires and make our requests known to God. He will relieve us by granting our petitions. The child asks because the parent is in the habit of granting the child's requests. As God's children, we are in desperate need of something, and we

turn to God for help. Neither the Bible nor the child of God knows anything of that half-infidel declaration that we are to answer our prayers. God answers prayer. The faithful Christian does not pray to stir himself up, but his prayer is the stirring up of himself to take hold of God. The heart of faith knows nothing of that specious skepticism, which stays the steps of prayer and chills its ardor by whispering that prayer does not affect God.

D. L. Moody used to tell a story of a little child whose father and mother had died and who was taken in by another family. The first night, she asked if she could pray like she used to. They said, "Oh, yes!" So she knelt down and prayed as her mother had taught her, and when that was ended, she added a little prayer of her own: "O God, make these people as kind to me as my father and mother were." Then she paused and looked up, as if expecting the answer, and then added: "Of course you will." That little one's faith was so sweetly simple! She expected God to answer and "do," and "of course" she got her request, and that is the spirit in which God invites us to approach Him.

In contrast to that incident is the story told of the quaint Yorkshire class leader, Daniel Quorm, who was visiting a friend. One afternoon, he came to the friend and said, "I am sorry you have met with such a great disappointment."

"Why, no," said the man, "I have not met with any disappointment."

"Yes," said Daniel, "you were expecting something remarkable today."

"What do you mean?" said the friend.

"Why did you pray that you might be kept sweet and gentle all day long?" "And, by the way things have been going, I see you have been greatly disappointed."

"Oh," said the man, "I thought you meant something particular."

Prayer is mighty in its operations, and God never disappoints those who put their trust and confidence in Him. They may have to wait long for the answer and not live to see it, but the prayer of faith never misses its object.

"A friend of mine in Cincinnati had preached his sermon and sunk back into his chair when he felt impelled to make another appeal," says Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman. "A boy at the back of the church lifted his hand. My friend left the pulpit and went down to him and said, "Tell me about yourself." The boy said, "I live in New York." I am a prodigal. I have disgraced my father's name and broken my mother's heart. I ran away and told them I would never come back until I became a Christian or they brought me home dead. That night, there came from Cincinnati a letter telling his father and mother that their son had turned to God.

"Seven days later, in a black-bordered envelope, a reply came that read: "My dear boy, when I got the news that you had received Jesus Christ, the sky was overcast; your father was dead." Then the letter went on to tell how the father had prayed for his prodigal son with his last breath and concluded, "You are a Christian to-night because your old father would not let you go."

A fourteen-year-old boy was given a task by his father. It so happened that a group of boys came along just then and stole the boy away, so the work went undone. But the father came home that evening and said, "Frank, did you do the work I gave you?" "Yes, sir," said Frank. He told an untruth, and his father knew it but said nothing. It troubled the boy, but he went to bed as usual. The following day, his mother said to him, "Your father did not sleep all last night."

"Why didn't he sleep?" asked Frank.

His mother said, "He spent the whole night praying for you."

This sent the arrow into his heart. He was deeply convicted of his sin and knew no rest until he had made peace with God. Long afterward, when the boy became Bishop Wayne, he said that his decision for Christ came from his father's prayer that night. He saw his father keeping his lonely and sorrowful vigil, praying for his son, and it broke his heart. He said, "I can never be sufficiently grateful to him for that prayer."

An evangelist, much used by God, has put on record that he commenced a series of meetings in a little church of about twenty members who were very cold, dead, and much divided. A little prayer meeting was kept up by two or three women. "I preached and closed at eight o'clock," he says. "There was no one to speak or pray." The next evening, one man spoke.

"The next morning I rode six miles to a minister's study and kneeled in prayer. I went back and said to the little church, "If you can make me out enough to board me, I will stay until God opens the windows of heaven."

God has promised to bless these means, and I believe He will.

Within ten days, there were so many anxious souls that I met one hundred and fifty of them at a time in an inquiry meeting, while Christians were praying in another house of worship. Several hundred, I think, were converted. "It is safe to believe in God."

A mother asked the late John B. Gough to visit her son to win him to Christ. Gough found the young man's mind full of skepticism and impervious to argument. Finally, the young man was asked to pray, just once, for light. He replied, "I do not know anything perfect for whom or for what I could pray." "How about your mother's love?" said the orator. "Isn't that perfect?" Hasn't she always stood by you and been ready to take you in and care for you, even when your father kicked you out? The young man choked with emotion and said, "Yes, sir; that is so." Then pray to

Love—it will help you. "Will you promise?" He promised. That night, the young man prayed in the privacy of his room. He kneeled, closed his eyes, and, struggling for a moment, uttered the words, "O love." The old Bible verse, "God is love," struck him like lightning. He cried in agony, "O God!" Then there was another flash of divine truth. A voice said, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," and he exclaimed instantly, "O Christ, Thou incarnation of divine love, show me light and truth." It was all over. He was in the light of the most perfect peace. He ran downstairs, added the narrator of this incident, and told his mother he was saved. That young man is now an eloquent minister of Jesus Christ.

A water famine was threatened in Hakodate, Japan. Miss Dickerson, of the Methodist Episcopal Girls' School, saw the water supply decreasing daily and, in one of the fall months, appealed to the Board in New York for help. There was no money on hand, and nothing was done. Miss Dickerson inquired about the cost of putting down an artesian well but found the expense too great to be undertaken. On the evening of December 31, when the water was almost exhausted, the teachers and the older pupils met to pray for water, though they had no idea how their prayer was to be answered. A couple of days later, a letter was received in the New York office, which read something like this: "Philadelphia, January 1st. It is six o'clock in the morning of New Year's Day. All the other members of the family are asleep, but I was awakened with the strange impression that someone, somewhere, is in need of money, which the Lord wants me to supply. Enclosed was a check for an amount that just covered the cost of the artesian well and the piping of the water into the school buildings.

"I have seen God's hand stretched out to heal among the heathen with as much mighty wonder-working power as in apostolic times," once said a well-known minister to the writer. "I was preaching to two thousand famine orphan girls at Kedgaum, India,

at Ramabai's Mukti (salvation) Mission. A swarm of serpents as venomous and deadly as the reptile that smote Paul suddenly raided the walled grounds, "sent of Satan," Ramabai said, and several of her most beautiful and faithful Christian girls were smitten by them, two of them bitten twice. I saw four of the flowers in her flock writhing and shaking at the same time. They seemed to be unconscious and in a lot of pain.

"Ramabai has an implicit and obedient faith in the Bible. There were three of us missionaries there. She said: "We will do just what the Bible says, I want you to minister for their healing according to James v. 14–18." She led the way into the dormitory where her girls were lying in spasms, and we laid our hands upon their heads and prayed, and we anointed them with oil in the name of the Lord. Each of them was healed as soon as she was anointed, and they sat up and sang with their faces shining. "That miracle and marvel among the heathen mightily confirmed the word of the Lord and was a profound and overpowering proclamation of God."

Some years ago, the record of a beautiful work of grace in connection with one of the stations of the China Inland Mission attracted a good deal of attention. The number and spiritual character of the converts had been far more significant than at other stations, where the consecration of the missionaries had been just as great as at the more fruitful place.

This rich harvest of souls remained a mystery until Hudson Taylor, on a visit to England, discovered the secret. At the close of one of his addresses, a gentleman came forward to make his acquaintance. In the conversation that followed, Mr. Taylor was surprised at the exact knowledge the man possessed concerning this inland China station. "But how is it," Mr. Taylor asked, "that you are so conversant with the conditions of that work?" "Oh, the missionary there and I are old college friends; for years we have regularly

corresponded; he has sent me names of inquirers and converts, and these I have taken daily to God in prayer," he replied.

At last, the secret was found. A praying man at home, praying fervently and daily for specific cases among the heathen. That is the intercessory missionary.

Hudson Taylor himself, as all the world knows, was a man who knew how to pray and whose praying was blessed with fruitful answers. In the story of his life, told by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, we find page after page aglow with answered prayer. On his way out to China for the first time, in 1853, when he was only twenty-one years of age, he had a definite answer to prayer that was a great encouragement to his faith. "They had just come through the Dampier Strait but were not yet out of sight of the islands. Usually, a breeze would spring up after sunset and last until about dawn. The utmost use was made of it, but during the day they lay still with flapping sails, often drifting back, and losing a good deal of the advantage gained at night. The story continues in Hudson Taylor's own words:

"This happened notably on one occasion when we were in dangerous proximity to the north of New Guinea. Saturday night had brought us to a point some thirty miles off the land, and during the Sunday morning service, which was held on deck, I could not fail to notice that the Captain looked troubled and often went over to the side of the ship. When the service was ended, I learned the reason from him. A four-knot current was carrying us toward some sunken reefs, and we were already so near that it seemed improbable that we should get through the afternoon in safety. After dinner, the long boat was put out, and all hands endeavored, without success, to turn the ship's head from the shore.

"After standing together on the deck for some time in silence, the Captain said to me:

"Well, we have done everything that can be done." We can only await the result.

"A thought occurred to me, and I replied, "No, there is one thing we have not done yet."

"What is that?" he queried.

"Four of us on board are Christians. Let us each retire to our own cabin and, in unison, ask the Lord for a breeze. He can send it as easily now as at sunset.

The Captain followed this proposal. I went and spoke to the other two men, and after prayer with the carpenter, we all four retired to wait upon God. I had a good but very brief season in prayer, and then I felt so satisfied that our request was granted that I could not continue asking, and very soon I went up again on deck. The first officer, a godless man, was in charge. I went over and asked him to let down the clews, or corners, of the mainsail, which had been drawn up in order to lessen the useless flapping of the sail against the rigging.

"What would be the good of that?" he answered roughly.

"I told him we had been asking for a wind from God and that it was coming immediately, and we were so near the reef by this time that there was not a minute to lose.

"With an oath and a look of contempt, he said he would rather see a wind than hear of it."

"But while he was speaking, I watched his eye, following it up to the royal, and there, sure enough, the corner of the topmost sail was beginning to tremble in the breeze.

"Don't you see the wind is coming?" Look at the royals! I exclaimed.

"No, it is only a cat's paw," he rejoined (a mere puff of wind).

"Cat's paw or no cat's paw," I pleaded, "please let down the mainsail and give us the benefit."

"This he was not slow to do." In another minute, the heavy tread of the men on deck brought up the Captain from his cabin to see what was the matter. The breeze had indeed come! We were plowing through the water at six or seven knots per hour in a matter of minutes, and while the wind was occasionally unsteady, we didn't completely lose it until we passed the Peeleew Islands.

"So God told me," says this praying saint, "before I set foot on China's shores, to pray to Him about every kind of need and expect that He would honor the name of the Lord Jesus by giving the help each emergency needed."

In an address at Cambridge some time ago (reported in "The Life of Faith," April 3rd, 1912), Mr. S. D. Gordon told in his own inimitable way the story of a man in his own country to illustrate from real life the fact of the reality of prayer and that it is not mere talking.

"This man," said Mr. Gordon, "came of an old New England family, a bit farther back than an English family." He was a giant in size, a keen man mentally, and a university-trained man. He had gone out west to live and represented a prominent district in our House of Congress, answering to your House of Commons. He was a prominent leader there. He was raised in a Christian family, but he was a skeptic and used to lecture against Christianity. He told me he was fond, in his lectures, of proving, as he thought, conclusively that there was no God. That was the type of his infidelity.

"One day he told me he was sitting in the Lower House of Congress." It was at the time of a presidential election, and party spirit was high. One would have thought that was the last place where a man would be likely to think about spiritual things. He

said: "I was sitting in my seat in that crowded House and in that heated atmosphere when a feeling came to me that the God, whose existence I thought I could successfully disprove, was just there above me, looking down on me, and that He was displeased with me and with the way I was doing. I said to myself, "This is ridiculous; I guess I've been working too hard." I'll get a good meal, take a long walk, and shake myself, and see if that will take this feeling away. He got his extra meal, took a walk, and came back to his seat, but the impression would not be shaken off that God was there and was displeased with him. He went for walks day after day but could never shake the feeling off. Then he went back to his constituency in his state, he said, to arrange matters there. He had the ambition to be the governor of his state, and his party was the dominant party in the state, so, as far as such things could be judged, he was in the running to become governor there, in one of the most dominant states of our Central West. He said, "I went home to fix that thing up as far as I could and to get ready for it." But I had hardly reached home and exchanged greetings when my wife, who was an earnest Christian woman, said to me that a few of them had made a little covenant of prayer that I might become a Christian. He did not want her to know the experience that he had just been going through, and so he said as carelessly as he could, "When did this thing begin, this praying of yours?" She named the date. Then he did some very quick thinking, and he knew, as he thought back, that it was the day on the calendar when that strange impression came to him for the first time.

He said to me, "I was tremendously shaken." I wanted to be honest. I was perfectly honest in not believing in God and thought I was right. But if what she said was true, then merely as a lawyer sifting his evidence in a case, it would be good evidence that there was really something in their prayer. I was terrifically shaken, wanted to be honest, and did not know what to do. That night I

went to a little Methodist chapel, and if somebody had learned to talk with me, I think I should have accepted Christ that night.

Then he said that the next night he went back again to that chapel, where meetings were being held each night, and there he kneeled at the altar and yielded his great, strong will to the will of God. Then he said, "I knew I was to preach," and he is preaching still in a western state. That is half the story. I also talked with his wife—I wanted to put the two halves together to get a bit of teaching out of it—and she told me this. She had been a Christian—"what you call a nominal Christian"—a strange confusion of terms. Then there came a time when she was led into a full surrender of her life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Then she said, "At once there was a great intensification of desire that my husband might be a Christian, and we made that little compact to pray for him each day until he became a Christian." That night I was kneeling at my bedside before going to rest, praying for my husband, praying very earnestly, and then a voice said to me, "Are you willing for the results that will come if your husband is converted?" The little message was so distinct that she said she was frightened; she had never had such an experience. But she went on praying still more earnestly, and again there came the quiet voice, "Are you willing for the consequences?" And there was that startled, terrified feeling again. But she still went on praying and wondering what this meant, and a third time the quiet voice came more quietly than ever as she described it: "Are you willing for the consequences?"

Then she told me she said with great earnestness, "O God, I am willing for anything Thou dost think good, if only my husband may know Thee and become a true Christian man." She said that instantly, when that prayer came from her lips, there came into her heart a wonderful sense of peace, a great peace that she could not explain, a "peace that passes understanding," and from that moment—it was the very night of the covenant, the night when her husband had that first strange experience—the assurance never left

her that he would accept Christ. But she prayed for weeks with the firm assurance that the result would come. What were the consequences? They were of a kind that I think no one would consider small. She was the wife of a man in a very prominent political position; she was the wife of a man who was in line to become the first official of his state, and she was officially the first lady socially of that state, with all the honor that that social standing would imply. Now she is the wife of a Methodist preacher, with her home changing every two or three years, going from this place to that, having a very different social position, and having a very different income than she would otherwise have had. "Yet I never met a woman who had more of the wonderful peace of God in her heart and of the light of God in her face than that woman."

And Mr. Gordon's comment on that incident is this: "Now, you can see at once that there was no change in the purpose of God through that prayer." The prayer worked out His purpose; it did not change it. But the woman's surrender gave her the opportunity to work out the will that God wanted to work out. If we might give ourselves to Him and learn His will and use all our strength in learning it and bending to it, then we would begin to pray, and there is simply nothing that could resist the tremendous power of the prayer. Oh, for more men who will be simple enough to get in touch with God, give Him the mastery of their whole lives, learn His will, and then give themselves, as Jesus gave Himself, to the sacred service of intercession!

To the man or woman who is acquainted with God and who knows how to pray, there is nothing remarkable in the answers that come. They are sure of being heard since they ask in accordance with what they know to be the mind and will of God. Dr. William Burt, Bishop of Europe in the Methodist Episcopal Church, says that a few years ago, when he visited the Boys' School in Vienna, he found that, although the school year was not over, all available

funds had been spent. He hesitated to make a special appeal to his friends in America. He counseled with the teachers. They took the matter to God in earnest and continued to pray, believing that He would grant their request. Ten days later Bishop Burt was in Rome, and there came to him a letter from a friend in New York, which read substantially thus: "As I went to my office on Broadway one morning [and the date was the very one on which the teachers were praying], a voice seemed to tell me that you were in need of funds for the Boys' School in Vienna." "I very gladly enclose a check for the work." The check was for the amount needed. There had been no human communication between Vienna and New York. But while they were yet speaking, God answered them.

Some time ago, there appeared in an English Religious weekly the report of an incident narrated by a well-known preacher during an address to children. For the truth of the story, he was able to vouch. A child lay sick in a country cottage, and her younger sister heard the doctor say, as he left the house, "Nothing but a miracle can save her." The little girl went to her money box, took out the few coins it held, and in perfect simplicity of heart went to shop after shop in the village street, asking, "Please, I want to buy a miracle." From each, she came away disappointed. Even the local chemist had to say, "My dear, we don't sell miracles here." But outside his door, two men were talking and had overheard the child's request. One was a great doctor from a London hospital, and he asked her to explain what she wanted. When he understood the need, he hurried with her to the cottage, examined the sick girl, and said to the mother: "It is true—only a miracle can save her, and it must be performed at once." He got his instruments, performed the operation, and the patient's life was saved.

D. L. Moody gives this illustration of the power of prayer: "While in Edinburgh, a man was pointed out to me by a friend, who said: "That man is chairman of the Edinburgh Infidel Club." I went and

sat beside him and said, "My friend, I am glad to see you in our meeting." "Are you concerned about your welfare?"

"I do not believe in any hereafter."

"Well, just get down on your knees and let me pray for you."

"No, I do not believe in prayer."

I kneeled beside him as he sat and prayed. He made a great deal of sport of it. A year later, I met him again. I took him by the hand and said, "Hasn't God answered my prayer yet?"

"There is no God." If you believe in one who answers prayer, try your hand on me.

"Well, a great many are now praying for you, and God's time will come, and I believe you will be saved yet."

Sometime afterwards, I got a letter from a leading barrister in Edinburgh telling me that my infidel friend had come to Christ and that seventeen of his clubmen had followed his example.

"I did not know how God would answer prayer, but I knew He would answer." "Let us come boldly to God."

Robert Louis Stevenson tells a vivid story of a storm at sea. The passengers below were alarmed as the waves dashed over the vessel. At last one of them, against orders, crept to the deck and came to the pilot, who was lashed to the wheel, which he was turning without flinching. The pilot caught sight of the terror-stricken man and gave him a reassuring smile. Below went the passenger, who comforted the others by saying, "I have seen the face of the pilot, and he smiled." "All is well."

That is how we feel when we find our way into the Father's presence through the gateway of prayer. We see His face and know that all is well since His hand is on the helm of events, and "even the winds and the waves obey Him." When we live in fellowship

with Him, we can go into His presence confidently, knowing that if we ask, we will get an answer that proves our faith.

Let your hearts be set on religious revivals. Never forget that churches have existed and prospered through revivals in the past. If they are to live and flourish in the future, it must be through the same cause that has been their glory and defense from the beginning. Joel Hawes

Any minister who can be satisfied without conversions will have no conversions. —C. H. Spurgeon

I do not believe that my desires for a revival were ever half as strong as they ought to be, nor do I see how a minister can help to be in a "constant fever" when his Master is dishonored and souls are destroyed in so many ways. — Edward Payson,

An aged saint once came to the pastor at night and said, "We are about to have a revival." He was asked why he knew. His answer was, "I went into the stable to take care of my cattle two hours ago, and there the Lord has kept me in prayer until just now." And we are going to be revived. It was the beginning of a revival. —H. C. Fish.

Chapter 12

It has been said that the history of revivals is the history of religion, and no one can study their history without being impressed with their mighty influence upon the destiny of the race. To look back over the progress of the Divine Kingdom upon earth is to review revival periods that had come like refreshing showers upon the dry and thirsty ground, making the desert blossom as the rose and bringing new eras of spiritual life and activity just when the Church had fallen under the influence of the apathy of the times and needed to be aroused to a new sense of her duty and responsibility. "From one point of view, and this is not the least important," writes Principal Lindsay in "The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries," "the history of the Church flows from one time of revival to another, and whether we take the awakenings in the old Catholic, the medieval, or the modern Church, these have always been the work of men who were specially gifted with the ability to see and speak the secrets of the deepest Christian life, and the effect of their work."

As God, from the beginning, has wrought prominently through revivals, there can be no denial of the fact that revivals are a part of the Divine plan. The Kingdom of our Lord has been advanced in considerable measure by special seasons of gracious and rapid accomplishment of the work of conversion. It may be inferred, therefore, that the means through which God has worked in other times will be employed in our time to produce similar results. "The quiet conversion of one sinner after another, under the ordinary ministry of the Gospel," says one writer on the subject, "must always be regarded with feelings of satisfaction and gratitude by the ministers and disciples of Christ; but a periodical manifestation of the simultaneous conversion of thousands is also to be desired, because of its adaptation to afford a visible and impressive demonstration that God has made that same Jesus, who was

rejected and crucified, both Lord and Christ; and that, in virtue of His Divine Mediatorship, He has assumed the royal scepter of universal supremacy and "must reign till all His enemies are made His footstool." It is, therefore, reasonable to expect that, from time to time, He will repeat that which, on the day of Pentecost, formed the conclusive and crowning evidence of His Messiahship and Sovereignty; and, by so doing, startle the slumbering souls of careless worldlings, gain the attentive ear of the unconverted, and, remarkably, break in upon those brilliant dreams of earthly glory, grandeur, wealth, power, and happiness, which the rebellious and God-forgetting multitude so fondly cherish. Such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit is both demonstrative proofs of His once offering Himself as a sacrifice for sin and a prophetic "earnest" of the certainty that He "shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation" to judge the world in righteousness.

And that revivals are to be expected, proceeding as they do from the correct use of the appropriate means, is a fact that needs not a minor emphasis in these days when the material is exalted at the expense of the spiritual and when ethical standards are supposed to be supreme. That a revival is not Charles G. Finney powerfully taught a miracle. There might, he said, be a miracle among its antecedent causes, or there might not be. The Apostles used miracles to draw attention to their message and establish its Divine authority. But the miracle was not the revival. The miracle was one thing; the revival followed it was quite another. The revivals in the Apostles' days were connected with miracles, but they were not miracles. All revivals depend upon God, but in revivals, as in other things, He invites and requires man's aid. The total result is obtained when there is cooperation between the Divine and the human. In other words, to employ a familiar phrase, God alone can save the world, but God cannot save the world alone. God and man collaborate on the task, with the divine being's response always proportional to the human's desire and effort.

This cooperation, then, being necessary, what is the duty which we, as co-workers with God, must undertake? First and foremost, and most importantly, we must give ourselves to prayer. This is something we want to stress. "Revivals," as Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman reminds us, "are born in prayer." When Wesley prayed, England was revived; when Knox prayed, Scotland was refreshed; and when the Sunday School teachers of Tannybrook prayed, 11,000 young people were added to the Church in a year. "Whole nights of prayer have always been succeeded by whole days of soul-winning."

When D. L. Moody's Church in Chicago lay in ashes, he went to England in 1872, not to preach but to listen to others preach while his new church was being built. One Sunday morning, he was prevailed upon to preach in a London pulpit. But somehow, the spiritual atmosphere was lacking. He confessed afterward that he had never had such a challenging time preaching. Everything was perfectly dead, and as he vainly tried to preach, he said to himself, "What a fool I was to consent to preach! "I came here to listen, and here I am preaching." Then the awful thought came to him that he had to preach again at night, and only the fact that he had promised to do so kept him faithful to the engagement. But when Mr. Moody entered the pulpit at night and faced the crowded congregation, he was conscious of a new atmosphere. "The powers of an unseen world seemed to have fallen upon the audience." As he drew towards the close of his sermon, he became encouraged to give out an invitation. As he concluded, he said, "If there is a man or woman here who will tonight accept Jesus Christ, please stand up." At once, about five hundred people rose to their feet. Thinking there must be some mistake, he asked the people to be seated. Then, to avoid misunderstanding, he repeated the invitation, couching it in even more definite and difficult terms. Again, the same number rose. Still thinking that something must be wrong, Mr. Moody, for the second time, asked the standing men and

women to be seated. Then he invited all who really meant to accept Christ to pass into the vestry. Fully 500 people did as requested, which was the beginning of a revival in that church and neighborhood, which brought Mr. Moody back from Dublin a few days later so that he might assist the incredible work of God.

But we have to tell what happened next, or the point of telling the story will be lost.

When Mr. Moody preached at the morning service, a woman in the congregation had an invalid sister. On her return home, she told the invalid that the preacher had been a Mr. Moody from Chicago, and on hearing this, she turned pale. "What," she said, "is Mr. Moody from Chicago?" I read about him some time ago in an American paper, and I have been praying to God to send him to London and our church. I would not have eaten breakfast if I had known he was going to preach this morning. I would have spent the whole time in prayer. Now, sister, leave the room, lock the door, and don't let anyone see me; no matter who comes, don't let them see me. "I will spend the whole afternoon and evening in prayer." And so, while Mr. Moody stood in the pulpit that had been like an ice chamber in the morning, the bedridden saint was holding him up before God. God, who delights to answer prayer, poured out His Spirit in mighty power.

The God of revivals, who answered the prayer of His child for Mr. Moody, is willing to hear and to answer the faithful, believing prayers of His people today. The revival will occur wherever God's conditions are met. Professor Thos. Nicholson, of Cornell College, U.S.A., relates an experience on his first circuit that impresses anew the old lesson of the place of prayer in the work of God.

There had not been a revival on that circuit in years, and things were not spiritually hopeful.

During more than four weeks, the pastor had preached faithfully, visited from house to house, in stores, shops, and out-of-the-way places, and done everything he could. The fifth Monday night saw many of the official members at lodges but only a corporal's guard at the church.

From that meeting, the pastor went home, cast down but not in despair. He resolved to spend that night in prayer. Locking the door, he took the Bible and hymn book and began to inquire more diligently of the Lord, though the meetings had been the subject of hours of earnest prayer. Only God knows the anxiety and the faithful, prayerful study of that night. Near the dawn, a great peace and a full assurance came that God would surely bless the plan that had been decided upon, and a text was chosen that he felt sure was of the Lord. Dropping upon the bed, the pastor slept for about two hours, then rose, hastily breakfasted, and went nine miles to the far side of the circuit to visit some sick people. All day, the assurance increased.

"Toward night, a pouring rain set in, the roads were heavy, and we reached home, wet, supperless, and a little late, only to find no fire in the church, the lights unlit, and no signs of service. The janitor had concluded that the rain would prevent the service. We changed the order, rang the bell, and prepared for war. Three young men formed the congregation, but in that "full assurance," the pastor delivered the message that had been prayed out on a preceding night as earnestly and thoroughly as if the house had been crowded, then made a personal appeal to each young man in turn. Two yielded and testified before the meeting closed.

"The tired pastor went to sweet rest. The following day, rising a little later than usual, he learned that one of the young men was going from store to store throughout the town, telling of his wonderful deliverance and urging the people to salvation. Night after night, conversions occurred until we heard 144 people testify

in forty-five minutes in two weeks. All three points of that circuit saw a blaze of revival that winter. Family after family came into the church until the membership more than tripled.

"Out of that meeting, one convert is a successful pastor in the Michigan Conference, another is the wife of one of the choicest of our pastors, and a third was in the ministry for several years and then went to another denomination, where he is faithful unto this day. Probably none of the members ever knew of the pastor's night of prayer. Still, he certainly believes that God somehow does for the man who thus prays what He does not do for the man who does not pray, and he is certain that "more things are accomplished by prayer than this world dreams of."

All the true revivals have been born in prayer.

When God's people become so concerned about the state of religion that they lie on their faces day and night in earnest supplication, the blessing will surely fall.

It has always been the same. Every revival of which we have any record has been bathed in prayer. Take, for example, the remarkable revival in Shotts (Scotland) in 1630. The fact that several then-persecuted ministers would participate in the solemn gathering, having become generally known, attracted a vast concourse of godly persons on this occasion from all quarters of the country. Several days were spent in social prayer preparatory to the service. In the evening, instead of retiring to rest, the multitude divided themselves into little bands and spent the whole night in supplication and praise. The Monday was consecrated to Thanksgiving, a practice not then common, and proved to be one of the great days of the feast. After much entreaty, John Livingston, chaplain to the Countess of Wigtown, a young man who was not ordained, agreed to preach. He had spent the night in prayer and conference, but as the hour of assembly approached, his heart quailed at the thought of addressing many aged and

experienced saints. He actually fled from the duty he had undertaken. But, as the kirk of Shotts faded from his sight, those words, "Was I ever a barren wilderness or a land of darkness?" struck him so hard that he was forced to return to work. He took for his text Ezekiel 36:25–26 and discoursed with great power for about two hours. Five hundred conversions were believed to have occurred under that one sermon, which was thus prefaced by prayer. "It was the sowing of a seed through Clydesdale so that many of the most eminent Christians of that country could date their conversion, or some remarkable confirmation of their case, from that day."

Of Richard Baxter, it has been said that "he stained his study walls with praying breath; and after becoming thus anointed with the unction of the Holy Ghost, he sent a river of living water over Kidderminster." Whitfield once thus prayed, "O Lord, give me souls or take my soul." After much closet pleading, "he once went to the Devil's fair and took more than a thousand souls out of the paw of the lion in a single day."

Mr. Finney says, "I once knew a minister who had a revival for fourteen winters in a row. I did not know how to account for it till I saw one of his members get up in a prayer meeting and make a confession. "Brethren," he said, "I have been long in the habit of praying every Saturday night till after midnight for the descent of the Holy Ghost among us." And now, brethren (and he began to weep), I confess that I have neglected it for two or three weeks. The secret was out. That minister had a praying church.

And so we might go on multiplying illustration upon illustration to show the place of prayer in revival and to demonstrate that every mighty movement of the Spirit of God has had its source in the prayer chamber. The lesson of it all is this: as workers together with God, we must regard ourselves as being in no small measure responsible for the conditions that prevail around us today. Are we

concerned about the coldness of the Church? Do we grieve over the lack of conversions? Does our soul go out to God in midnight cries for the outpouring of His Spirit?

If not, part of the blame lies at our door. If we do our part, God will do His. Around us is a world lost in sin; above us is a God willing and able to save; it is ours to build the bridge that links heaven and earth, and prayer is the mighty instrument that does the work.

And the old cry comes to us with an insistent voice, "Pray, brethren, pray."

Lord Jesus, make me aware of the glory and sweetness of Thy name in my daily life and then teach me how to use it in prayer so that I may be like Israel, a prince who prevails with God. Your name is my passport and secures my access; your name is my plea and ensures my answer; your name is my honor and secures my glory. Blessed be Thy Name, Thou art honey in my mouth, music in my ear, heaven in my heart, and everything in between to every fiber of my being!—C. H. Spurgeon

I do not mean that every prayer we offer is answered exactly as we desire it to be. Were this the case, it would mean that we would be dictating to God, and prayer would degenerate into a mere system of begging. Just as an earthly father knows what is best for his children's welfare, so does God consider the particular needs of His human family and meet them out of His incredible storehouse. If our petitions are in accordance with His will and if we seek His glory in the asking, the answers will come in ways that will astonish us and fill our hearts with songs of thanksgiving. God is a rich and bountiful Father, and He does not forget His children nor withhold from them anything that would be to their advantage to receive. — J. Kennedy Maclean

Chapter 13

The example of our Lord in the matter of prayer is one that His followers might well copy. Christ prayed much, and He taught much about prayer. His life, works, and teaching all demonstrate the nature and significance of prayer. He lived and labored to answer prayers. However, the importance of impetus in prayer was emphasized in His prayer teaching. He taught not only that men must pray but that they must persevere in prayer.

He taught in command and precept the idea of energy and earnestness in praying. He provides gradation and climax to our efforts. We are to ask, but to the asking, we must add seeking, and seeking must pass into the full force of action in knocking. The pleading soul must be aroused to the effort by God's silence. Denial, rather than suppressing, must reawaken its latent energies and rekindle its highest ardor.

In the Sermon on the Mount, in which He lays down the cardinal duties of His religion, He not only gives prominence to prayer in general and secret prayer in particular, but He sets apart a distinct and different section to give weight to importunate prayer. To prevent any discouragement in praying, He lays out as a fundamental principle the fact of God's great fatherly willingness — that God's desire to answer our prayers exceeds our willingness to give good and necessary things to our children, just as God's ability, goodness, and perfection exceed our infirmities and evil. Christ provides the most positive and iterated assurance of an answer to prayers as a further assurance and stimulant to prayer. He declares: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "To everyone that asks, it shall be given; and to him, that seeks, he shall find; and to him, that knocks, it shall be opened," he adds.

Why does He reveal to us the Father's loving readiness to answer the prayers of His children? Why does He insist so strongly that prayer will be answered? Why does he say that positive affirmation six times in a row? Why does Christ, on two distinct occasions, make the same strong promises, iterations, and reiterations regarding the certainty of prayer being answered? Because He knew that there would be delays in many an answer, which would call for importunate pressing, and that if our faith did not have the strongest assurance of God's willingness to answer, a delay would break it down. And that our spiritual sloth would enter the picture under the guise of submission, claiming that it is not God's will to grant us our requests, so we should stop praying and lose our case. After Christ had put God's willingness to answer prayer in a clear and strong light, he urged importunity, saying that every unanswered prayer should only increase intensity and energy instead of decreasing our pressure. If asking does not get you anything, let asking pass into the settled attitude and spirit of seeking. If seeking does not secure the answer, let seeking pass on to the more energetic and boisterous plea of knocking. We must persevere until we get it. There is no failure here if our faith does not break down.

Our Lord, as our great example in prayer, makes love the primary condition—love that has purified the heart of all elements of hatred, revenge, and ill will. Love is the supreme condition of prayer; a life inspired by love. The 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians is the law of prayer as well as the law of love. The law of love is the law of prayer, and to master this chapter from the epistle of St. Paul, one must learn the first and fullest condition of prayer.

Christ taught us to approach the Father in His name. That is our passport. It is in His name that we are to make our petitions known. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father." And whatever you ask

in My name, I will do in order for the Father to be glorified in the Son. "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."

How wide and comprehensive is that "whatever?" There is no limit to the power of that name. "Whatever ye may ask. "That is the Divine declaration, and it opens to every praying child a vista of infinite resource and possibility.

And that is our heritage. All that Christ has may become ours if we obey the conditions. One secret is prayer. The place of revelation and equipment, of grace and power, is the prayer chamber, and as we meet there with God, we shall not only win our triumphs but also grow in the likeness of our Lord and become His living witnesses to men.

Without prayer, the Christian life, robbed of its sweetness and beauty, becomes cold, formal, and dead. Still, rooted in the secret place where God meets and walks and talks with His own, it grows into such a testimony of Divine power that all men will feel its influence and be touched by the warmth of its love. Thus, resembling our Lord and Master, we shall be used for God's glory and our fellow men's salvation.

And that is the purpose of all real prayer and the end of all faithful service.